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2018 ELECTIONS: A HISTORICAL POLITICAL JUNCTURE IN MEXICO

Guest editors: Francisco Javier Aparicio and Rodrigo Castro Cornejo

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2018 Elections

A Historical Political Juncture in Mexico

Francisco Javier Aparicio and Rodrigo Castro Cornejo*

The result from election day on July 1st, 2018 in Mexico can be considered an historical event from several points of view. Even if the victory of Andrés Manuel López Obrador had been forecast several weeks ahead by most national polls, his landslide margin of victory was indeed surprising, given recent presidential races in Mexico: he got 53.2 per cent of the national vote and his coalition got a widespread majority in both chambers of Congress.

Since Mexico's multi-party democracy is relatively young and increasingly competitive, majorities have been relatively scarce. The last time that a president was elected to office with an majority of votes in Mexico was in 1988, when elections were still organized by the government and marred with serious fraud accusations. On the other hand, the last time that a presidential candidate obtained a majority in both chambers of Congress was in 1994, only to lose it three years later in what later became a period of divided governments in Mexico that lasted more than two decades. During that period, the recurrence of divided governments was regarded as a hindrance for presidents to successfully carry out their government programs. Thus, the return to a unified government, this time under real multi-party competition and with fairer elections than those held during the hegemonic party period, would put to the test the checks and balances built during the country's democratic transition.

The Mexican party system also was put to the test in 2018. In the years preceding the elections there was a concern for an increasing fragmentation of the party

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system. The three major political parties, PRI, PAN and PRD, registered historical low vote shares in 2015, whereas the Movement for National Regeneration (Morena), the new political party led by López Obrador, entered the picture. Before the 2018 campaigns began, some experts anticipated yet another presidency elected with only a plurality of votes, as it had occurred since 1994. However, instead of more fragmentation, the traditional political parties suffered an unprecedented upheaval in the 2018 elections by Morena, a party that had only registered three years before, but that capitalized the discontent with mainstream parties. The 2018 election outcome posed two related questions: whether the party system had changed, and by how much, and whether this was the emergence of a new hegemonic party. Conversely, whether the coalition of Morena, PT and PES had merely taken the place of former mainstream parties such as PRD or PRI.

The 2018 elections brought the third partisan turnover in the presidency since 2000, a positive signal of democratization in Mexico. Moreover, for the second time the ruling party was displaced to a third place, as it occurred with the PAN in 2012, which is a clear sign that Mexican voters are perfectly able to punish undeserving governments at the polls. At the local level, between 2015 and 2018, there was also increased partisan turnover rates and increasingly competitive races, especially when electoral coalitions took place.

However, the victory of Andrés Manuel López Obrador is also important because it was the first turnover towards a left-leaning political option. Between 1988 and 2000, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas could not succeed in three attempts, and López Obrador only succeeded until his third race as a challenger. The consecutive defeats from left candidates had produced increased mistrust in electoral rules and democracy from an important segment of the Mexican electorate that had voted for left options for several years. For similar reasons, some voters interpreted the 2018 outcome as the first turnover or even as a regime change.

The fact that López Obrador ran as a challenger for the presidency three times in a row, also allows to analyze the 2018 elections as a case study on the importance of electoral campaigns, the effect of changing economic, political and social contexts, and the personal attributes of each candidate. After the highly contested and controversial 2006 election, where López Obrador was defeated by a margin of 0.53 per cent, and another electoral defeat by a wider margin in 2012, it seemed somewhat unlikely that he could succeed in a third race, especially by such a landslide as it finally happened. Nevertheless, a number of contextual factors operated in favor of his campaign in 2018: the wear and tear of two consecutive PAN governments, with Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderón, followed by the PRI with Enrique Peña—so called neoliberal governments; a lackluster economic performance, increasing levels of violence and insecurity, as well as a large number of corruption scandals both at federal and local levels.

The role and actual impact of some of the above-mentioned factors in the 2018 electoral results in Mexico, both at the aggregate level and on individual vote choices, take central part in the articles included in this special volume.

2018: AN ANGRY ELECTORATE AND THE DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE MEXICAN PARTY SYSTEM

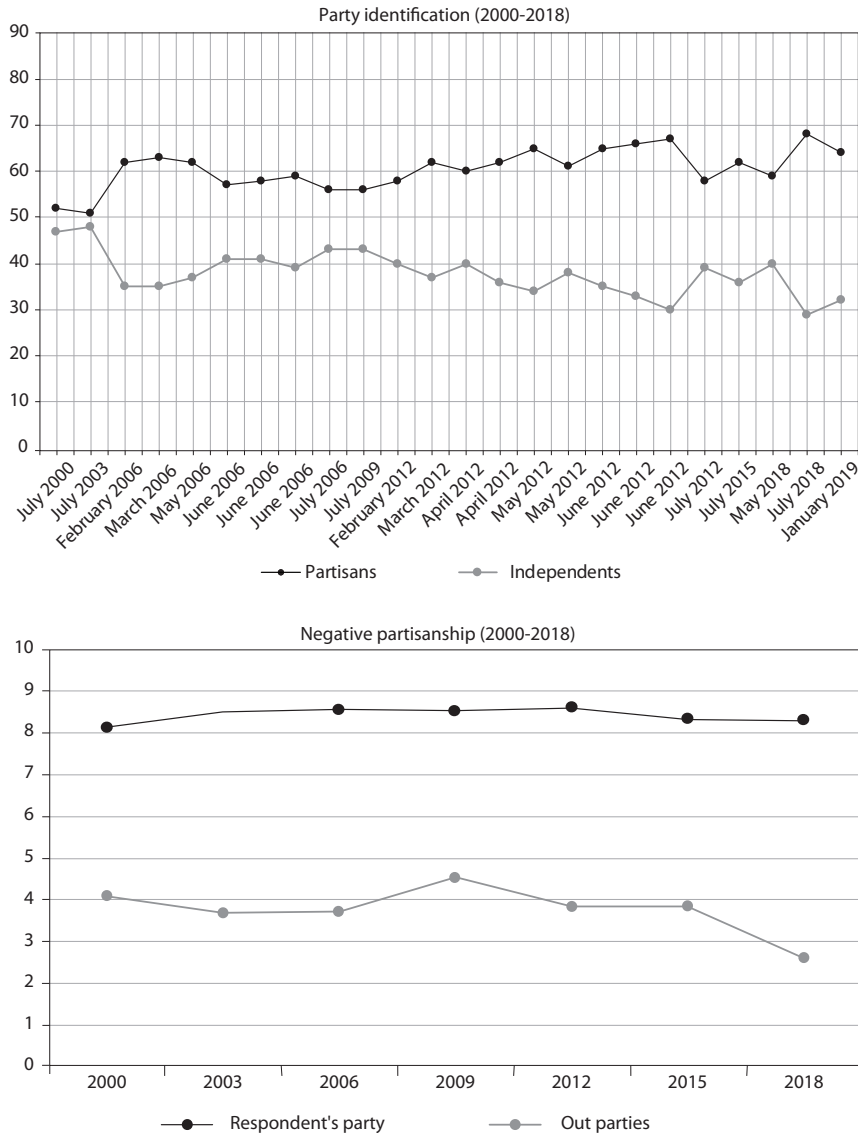
In this section, we analyze individual-level data that sheds light on the historic victory of Andrés Manuel López Obrador. As this section shows, and several studies in this special issue further analyze, the context of the 2018 election was uniquely negative. Most voters perceived that the overall economy, as well as corruption and insecurity were in bad shape in the country, and reported negative evaluations of the traditional three-party system in Mexico. This context seemed to benefit López Obrador's third bid for the presidency, allowing him to even broaden his electoral coalition adding new social groups that did not support him in the previous campaigns. This section relies on data from Mexico's National Electoral Study, which is the eighth postelection study conducted by CIDE and coordinated by Ulises Beltrán since 1997 (Beltrán, 1997; Beltrán, 2007; Beltrán, 2009a, 2009b; Beltrán and Castro Cornejo, 2019), which is part of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES). The CSES postelection study is a collaborative program among election study teams from around the world that includes a common module of survey questions in their post-election studies. The 2018 National Electoral Study is part of module 5 that focuses on the politics of populism with the aim to examine populist attitudes across young and long-standing democracies and examine how such populist perceptions shape voters' electoral behavior. Mexico's National Electoral Study also analyze issues that have been part of the questionnaire since 1997: voters' perceptions of parties and political elites, perceptions of the economy, satisfaction with democracy and representation, partisanship, ideology, political information, political efficacy, vote-buying, among others. The 2018 study was designed as a four-wave panel election study with two waves conducted before election day and the last two conducted after the election.¹

The 2018 National Electoral Study shows important continuity in terms of aggregate partisanship, which is widespread within the Mexican electorate. As Figure 1 shows,² Mexico's National Electoral Study (CIDE-CSES, 2018) has found since 2000 that around six out of ten voters in Mexico self-identifies with a political

¹Ulises Beltrán, Sandra Ley and Rodrigo Castro Cornejo were the co-principal investigators of the 2018 National Electoral Study (CIDE-CSES). The two pre-election waves were conducted in May (May 27-June 4, N=2 600) and June (22-28 June, N=1 239) and the two post-election waves were conducted one week after the July 2018 election (12-18 July, N=1 239) and January of 2019 (Jan 26-Feb 5, N=1 018).

²Figure 1 also includes survey data conducted by BGC Ulises Beltrán y Asocs. We thank Ulises Beltrán and Leticia Juárez for sharing their survey data conducted during the presidential campaigns

FIGURE 1. Partisanship in Mexico (2000-2018)



Source: National Electoral Study, CIDE-CSES, 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020) and BGC Beltrán Juárez and Asocs. (2018).

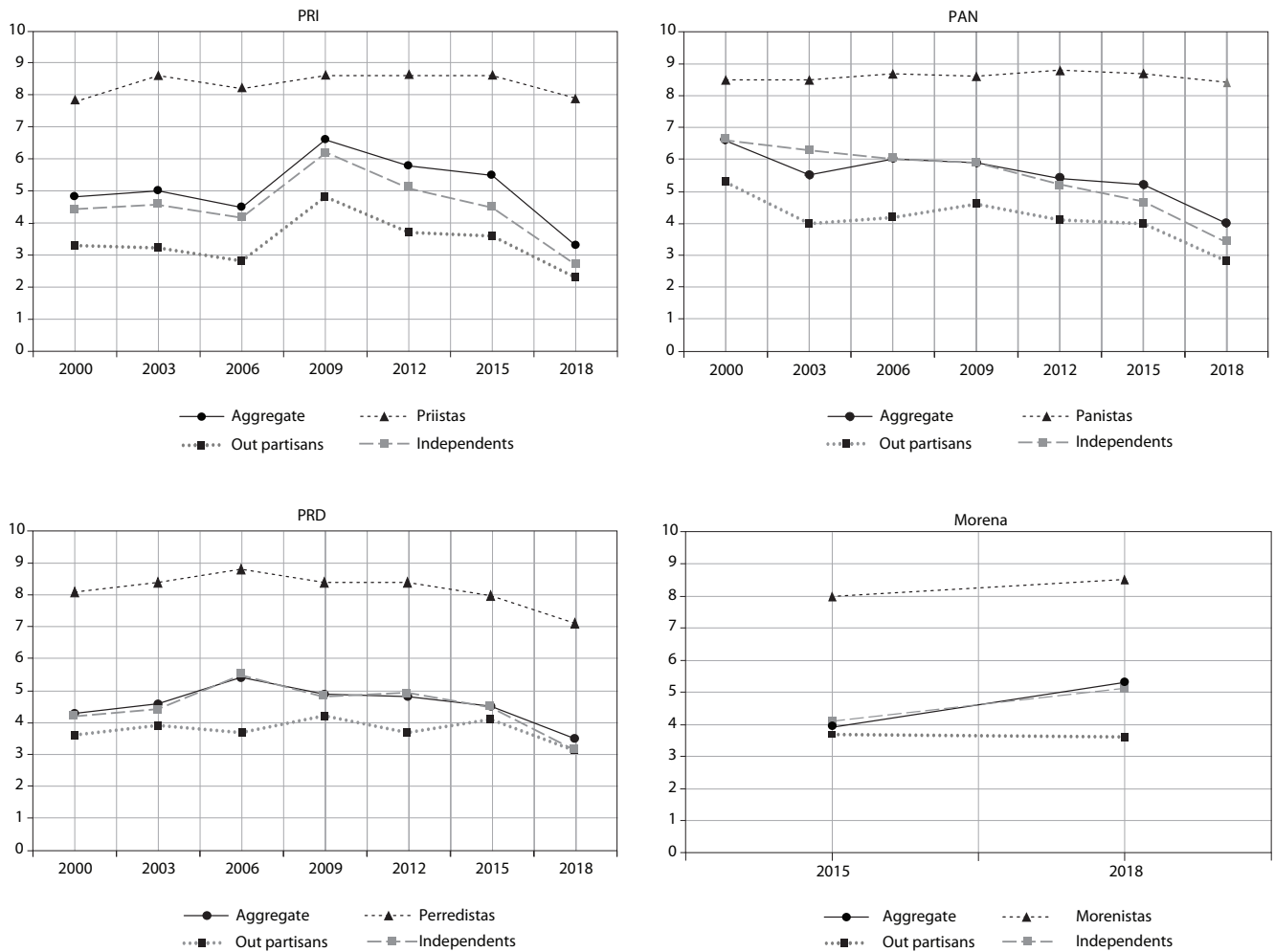
party, even when excluding independents that lean towards a political party. This is consistent with recent research in Latin American political behavior that finds that partisanship is stronger in the region that past literature considered (Lupu, 2015; Baker and Renno, 2019). In addition, similar to trends in other countries like the U.S. (Abramowitz, 2018), partisanship in Mexico is increasingly negative. Negative partisanship implies identification with a party but also loathing of the opposing

party and its candidates (Abramowitz and Webster, 2018). For instance, since Mexico's transition to democracy, the proportion of voters who both like their party and greatly dislike the opposing parties has increased significantly. Between 2000 and 2018, the average evaluation of the co-party on a feeling thermometer (where 0 means very bad opinion and 10 very good opinion) has been consistently above 8.0. However, in the same period, the average opinion of the out-party decreased; while, in 2000, the average was 4.1, in 2018, it decreased to 2.4 (Figure 1). This means that a majority of voters in Mexico do not dislike “all parties”, they dislike all parties—except theirs. These first results shed light on the increasing political polarization in Mexico politics that several studies have noticed at the elite level (Bruhn and Greene, 2007; Bruhn, 2012), but also seem to be extended among citizens.

While there are strong continuities in terms of aggregate partisanship, as expected, the entrance of a new major political party in 2015—Morena—, has altered the country's political environment. Even in contexts in which voters in young democracies have developed partisan loyalties, as it has been the case of Mexico (Castro Cornejo, 2019), these are necessarily limited by the success/survivability of parties (Mainwaring, 2018), party brand dilution (Lupu, 2014) or parties' changing reputations (Baker *et al.*, 2016). The Mexican party system did not experience the collapse of major parties in 2018 or the entire system as many Latin American countries in the past (e.g. Venezuela or Perú: Cameron, 1994; Morgan, 2011; Seawright, 2012; Lupu, 2016; Cyr, 2017). However, the emergence of a new major party has transformed voters' partisan attachments for an important part of the electorate. While partisan loyalties were fairly stable between 2000-2015, when priistas were the first partisan group, followed by panistas and perredistas, in 2018, morenistas became the larger partisan group. According to the 2018 National Electoral Study (CSES), 30 per cent of the electorate self-identified with Morena, 16 per cent with the PRI, 15 per cent with the PAN, 4 per cent with the PRD, and 30 per cent self-identifies as “independent”—a proportion of voters that is fairly consistent with past elections. This means that some voters have been able to develop long-term partisanship consistent with socio-psychological theories of partisanship (Campbell *et al.*, 1960; Green *et al.*, 2002; Lewis-Beck *et al.*, 2008). Some others have a short-term partisanship that allowed them to transition to a new party loyalty (Lupu, 2013; Castro Cornejo, forthcoming), particularly to Morena. This last type of partisanship seems to behave more like a “running tally” of political evaluations (Lupu, 2013), which is consistent with more rationalist interpretations of voting behavior (Fiorina, 1981).

As mentioned before, parties' changing reputations are likely to change partisan loyalties within the electorate. In fact, that happened among voters in Mexico when we analyze the evaluation of major parties—the PRI, PAN, and PRD—based on a feeling thermometer. As Figure 2 shows, partisans like their own party (PRI: 7.9; PAN:

FIGURE 2. Evaluation of major parties in Mexico (2000-2018)



Source: National Electoral Study, CIDE-CSES, 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020) and BGC Beltrán Juárez and Asocs. (2018).

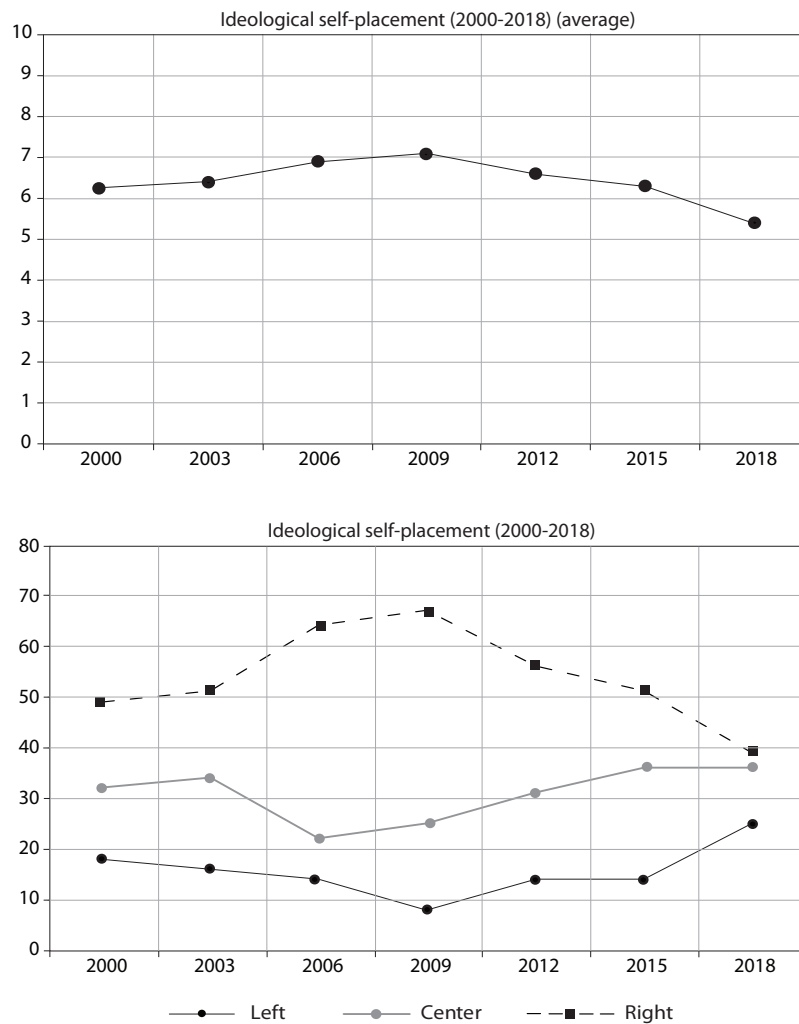
8.4; PRD: 7.1 on the 0-10 scale), but the average opinion of the three major parties in Mexico significantly eroded among out-partisans. While, in 2000, the PRI registered an average opinion of 4.8 (4.4 among independents and 3.3 among opposition voters) it declined to 3.3 in 2018 (2.7 among independents and 2.3 among opposition). In the case of the PAN, in 2000, it registered an average opinion of 6.6 (6.6 among independents and 5.3 among opposition voters) and declined to 4.0 in 2018 (3.4 among independents and 2.8 among opposition voters). The PRD declined from 4.3 (4.2 among independents and 3.6 among opposition voters) to 3.5 (3.1 among independents and 3.1 among opposition voters). These results show the important ero-

sion of the party system that was born as a product of Mexico's transition to democracy, which is an important context to understand the outcome of the 2018 presidential election. As several studies suggest, when stable party systems do little to respond to challenges in a country—whether a deteriorated economy or widespread corruption—(Seawright, 2012) parties become more susceptible to voters' short-term retrospective evaluations (Lupu, 2014) and the party systems begin experiencing a process of deinstitutionalization (Mainwaring, 2018). In the case of Morena, in 2018, it registered an aggregate opinion of 5.3, 8.5 among its co-partisans, 5.1 among independents, and 3.6 among opposition voters.

Another variable that tends to structure the way voters understand politics is ideology. Ideology is normally considered as a broad worldview along the left-right dimension (Converse, 1964; Zaller, 1992; Stimson, 1999). Following that perspective, both past (Beltrán, 2009a; 2009b) and recent studies (Sánchez y Sánchez, 2019) find that there are few ideologues within the Mexican electorate when measured on stances towards actual policies. In other words, there is no issue-based ideology since there is weak constraint between issues: voters who self-identify as leftists sometimes endorse conservative policies, or voters who self-identify as rightists sometimes support liberal policies. This is not uncommon even in long-standing democracies as in the U.S, where many conservatives tend to support some liberal welfare policies even though they self-identify with the “conservative” label (Ellis and Stimson, 2012).

Recent literature differentiates between issue-based ideology and symbolic ideology (Ellis and Stimson, 2012; Noel, 2014). This second perspective proposes that ideology is based in social identity (Mason, 2018a). Labels like “left” and “right” can be loosely connected with issues but have a psychological and emotional meaning for voters and, importantly, is associated with their electoral behavior and opinion formation. This is, in fact, what the literature in Mexico has found; regardless if the labels “left” and “right” have a substantive meaning, voters' ideological self-identification tends to be associated with vote choice (Moreno, 2015 and 2018). In terms of the 2018 election, the National Electoral Study (CSES) finds that issue-based ideology is weak³ and symbolic ideology experienced some important changes. For example, between 2000 and 2015, the average voters' ideological self-placement on the 0-10 scale oscillated between 6 and 7; in 2018, the average moved slightly to the left to a moderate 5.4 (Figure 3). Similarly, the proportion of voters who choose 0, 1 or 2, on the ideological scale increased to 25 per cent in 2018, while the per cent of respondents who choose 8, 9 or 10 decreased to 39 per cent.

³The 2018 National Electoral Study (CSES) included questions about issues like abortion, same-sex marriage, euthanasia, inequality and the role of the government, social spending, taxes, and the role of the state in the energy sector. In most cases, these issues were not strongly associated with partisanship or vote choice.

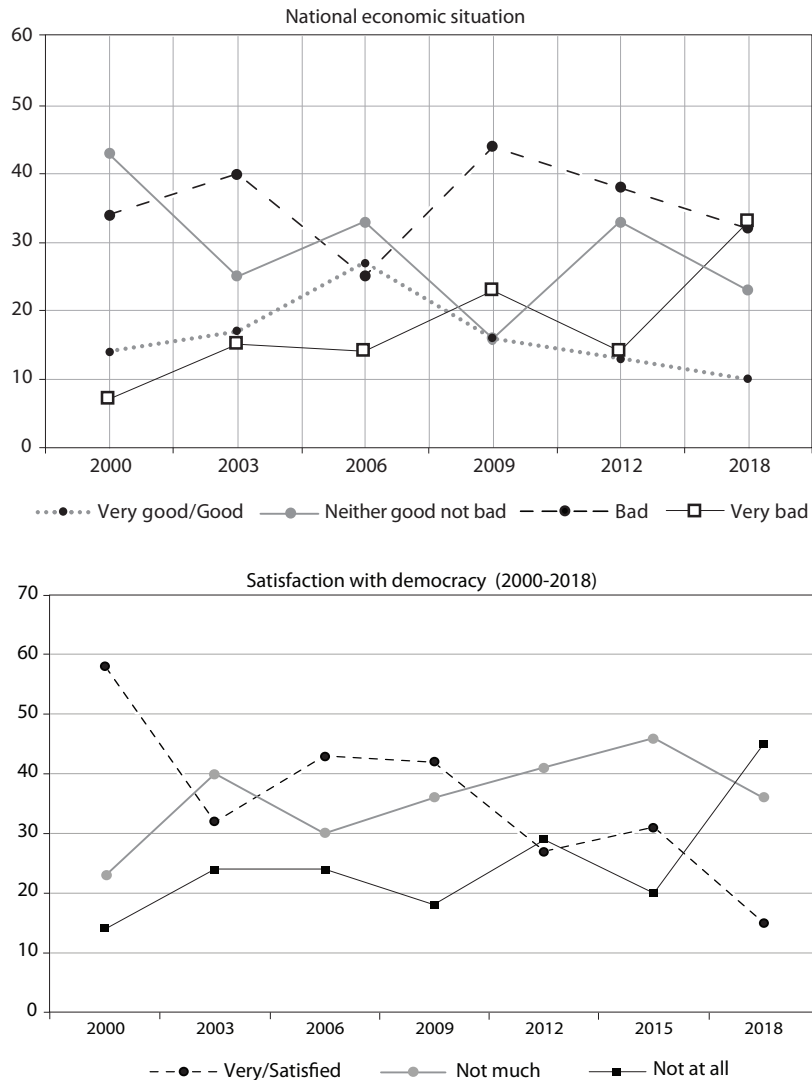
FIGURE 3. Symbolic ideology (2000-2018)

Source: National Electoral Study, CIDE-CSES, 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020).

These results speak to the historic victory of López Obrador who, regardless of its substantive content, has consistently identified with the political “left” building an emotional meaning to that label, which reported the highest proportion of voters choosing the left side of the ideological spectrum since the survey has been conducted in Mexico.

As several articles in this special issue discuss, the context of the 2018 election was uniquely negative, which is also reflected in the National Electoral Study (CSES). Perceptions about the national economy, corruption and security, in fact, reported the most negative opinions since the study has been conducted: 65 per

FIGURE 4. Evaluation of the economy and democracy (2000–2018)



Source: National Electoral Study, CIDE-CSES, 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020).

cent of voters considered that the economic situation of the country was “negative” or “very negative” (see Figure 4) and 63 per cent reported that their personal economic situation has “worsened” in the last year. Similarly, 79 per cent considered that the security was “equally bad” or have “worsened” in the last years, and 83 per cent reported that corruption in Mexico is “very” or “somewhat” widespread. Moreover, the presidential approval ratings are the lowest registered by this electoral survey: only 18 per cent of voters approved of the way Enrique Peña Nieto governed, well below previous presidents such as Vicente Fox (67%) and Felipe

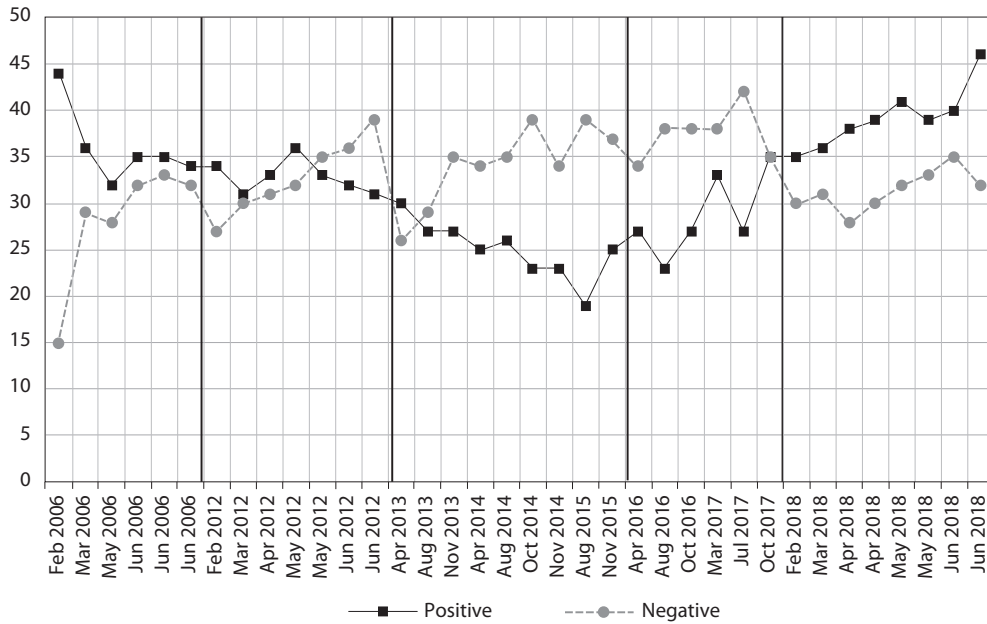
Calderón (54%). Not surprisingly, satisfaction with democracy also significantly decreased in 2018: while in 2000, 58 per cent of voters were satisfied and 22 per cent “somewhat” satisfied, in 2018, 45 per cent of voters were “not at all” satisfied with the way democracy works in Mexico (and 36 per cent “not much,” see Figure 4). In fact, most voters reported being angry with the country’s situation. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means “not angry” and 10 “very angry,” the average was 7.1; being independents (7.5) and morenistas (7.2) the ones that reported higher rates of anger compared to panistas (6.8) and priistas (6.7). These conditions seemed to be an ideal context for López Obrador’s third bid for the presidency: an angry electorate ready to be mobilized against the traditional party system in Mexico. This context also allowed him to broaden his electoral coalition, including voters who did not previously support his candidacy in 2006 and 2012, as the next section analyzes.

2006-2018: AMLO AND A NEW COALITION OF VOTERS

As discussed in the previous section, the Mexican electorate amid the 2018 presidential election was polarized, not particularly divided along programmatic lines but divided by a political identity/partisanship —what the literature calls “affective polarization” (Iyengar and Westwood, 2015; Iyengar *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, the context of the country seemed to generate important grievances among voters against the traditional party system in Mexico. In parallel to this deteriorated context, voters’ opinion about López Obrador was increasingly positive. Figure 5 shows results from nationally representative polls conducted by BGC Beltrán, Juárez y Asocs. between 2006 and 2018. The opinion ratings show a U-shape: during the 2006 campaign, the evaluation of López Obrador went from very positive to very divided; during the 2012 campaign, it became negative as the campaign unfolded; during the term of Enrique Peña Nieto, the opinion of López Obrador was negative until 2015, and from then onward to the 2018 campaign, they became more positive and switched to very positive by the end of the campaign. In fact, by the end of the 2018 presidential campaign, López Obrador’s favorability was fairly similar to the first part of the 2006 campaign: more than 45 of the electorate reported a “very good” or “good” opinion about López Obrador.

One of the most significant changes is the renovated electoral coalition that allowed López Obrador to win the 2018 election in his third bid for the Presidency. As Table 1 reports, in 2006, López Obrador received slightly more support from men, younger voters, voters with higher levels of education, voters who self-identify as leftists (symbolic ideology, as previously discussed), voters who live in urban electoral districts and who report having no religion (“nones”). In turn, in 2018, López Obrador was finally able to win the independent vote —always necessary for a winning coalition— gained support from self-identified moderates and rightists, and closed the gender, education and urban/rural gaps. In other words, his third

FIGURE 5. Opinion of Andrés Manuel López Obrador



Source: BGC Beltrán Juárez and Asocs. (2018).

TABLE 1. Vote for AMLO (2006–2018) (% who reporting voting for AMLO of the three-party vote)

Among...	2006			2012			2018		
	PAN	PRI	AMLO	PAN	PRI	AMLO	PAN	PRI	AMLO
<i>Party Identification</i>									
Panistas	93	3	5	90	6	4	93	2	5
Priistas	10	80	9	2	95	3	4	91	5
Perredistas	1	2	97	2	5	94	53	6	41
Morenistas	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	1	98
Independents	47	14	40	19	45	35	22	15	62
<i>Ideology</i>									
Left (0-3)	11	14	75	9	22	78	16	16	68
Center (4-6)	39	22	39	22	46	32	27	21	52
Right (7-10)	53	18	30	31	55	14	31	25	44
<i>Gender</i>									
Male	41	20	40	22	49	29	27	18	55
Female	45	20	35	27	48	25	25	24	52

TABLE 1. Vote for AMLO (2006-2018) (% who reporting voting for AMLO of the three-party vote) (continuation)

Among...	2006			2012			2018		
	PAN	PRI	AMLO	PAN	PRI	AMLO	PAN	PRI	AMLO
<i>Education</i>									
Elementary	41	25	34	20	51	29	21	24	56
Middle School	47	18	35	24	53	23	27	19	54
High School	44	13	44	29	41	30	30	21	49
College +	43	11	47	33	37	31	31	18	51
<i>Age</i>									
18-25	42	14	44	28	47	26	28	17	55
26-40	47	19	34	25	50	26	29	18	53
41-60	40	23	37	24	50	27	22	25	53
61+	39	26	34	21	45	34	22	27	51
<i>Religion</i>									
Catholic	45	19	36	24	49	27	24	24	52
Evangelical	31	25	43	22	50	28	25	17	57
None	34	20	46	28	44	29	31	12	57
<i>Electoral District</i>									
Rural	43	30	27	21	57	23	21	21	45
Mixed	44	21	35	20	57	23	20	19	47
Urban	43	16	41	26	45	29	23	17	46

Source: National Electoral Study, CIDE-CSES, 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020).

candidacy broaden his electoral coalition and received support equally from men/women, lower-educated/highly-educated voters, and rural/urban voters. This broad coalition of voters made possible the victory of López Obrador, the first candidate of the political left to win the Presidency in the 30 years of democracy in Mexico.

SPECIAL ISSUE OF THE 2018 ELECTION IN MEXICO

In this special issue we present articles that address several questions related to the historical political juncture that Mexico experienced in the 2018 election: Why did the Mexican electorate vote the way they vote? What were the patterns of support for the major parties in Mexico? What was the most important issue driving support for López Obrador? Did populism, campaigns, and topics like religion affect voters' electoral behavior? Moreover, this special issue is a collaborative effort not only to

understand voters' decisions but also the erosion of electoral institutions, corruption, and the increasing political violence that took place in this past electoral cycle that provide important context to our understanding of Mexico's democracy in 2018.

This special issue includes seven articles and four research notes that analyze issue voting, voters' populist attitudes, party system nationalization, electoral institutions, corruption, electoral violence, social media, vote buying, corruption, the indigenous vote, and religion and politics. Two papers rely on data from the 2018 National Electoral Study (CIDE-CSES) and analyze vote choice and turnout in the presidential election. Melina Altamirano and Sandra Ley focus on the three campaign issues that stood out among the Mexican electorate: the economy, security and corruption. They study the effect of these three issues on vote choice and find that the evaluations of the state of the economy, in first place, and national security, in second, are associated with voting for López Obrador. Interestingly, despite the fact that corruption was widely discussed by López Obrador during the electoral campaign, it was not a relevant variable to understand voters' support for his candidacy. This paper contributes to our understanding of the victory of López Obrador but also to the literature in comparative political behavior. As opposed to most studies that tend to focus on a single issue, Altamirano and Ley's article evaluate the simultaneous effect of these three major issues within the same survey, something that is rarely observed in comparative studies.

Castro Cornejo *et al.* focus on how populist attitudes mobilized voters during the 2018 presidential campaign. In particular, they study the three conditions analyzed by the literature that are required for the populist activation: a national context that produces grievances within the electorate, a belief of a corrupt elite, and anger about the situation of the country. Interestingly, voters' partisanship moderates the effect of populist attitudes on voters' mobilization. In other words, only morenistas and independents met the three conditions of a populist mobilization: morenistas and independents with high populist attitudes were *a)* more likely to report negative evaluations of the national economy, security, and corruption, *b)* more likely to believe that there was "mafia del poder" in Mexico, and *c)* more likely to report being angry about the situation in the country and more likely to go to the polls. Similar than Altamirano and Ley's paper, this research contributes to the literature by evaluating the three conditions for the populist mobilization in the same study, something that is also rarely observed in comparative studies of populism.

The next two papers rely on aggregate-level data to understand patterns of support for the PRI and patterns of nationalization across parties. Milena Ang studies the unprecedented rise of governors prosecuted and incarcerated for corruption during the sexenio of Enrique Peña Nieto, most of which were from the PRI. These cases, in fact, affected support for the PRI in the 2018 presidential election. With

qualitative evidence, the author finds that these cases weakened the PRI's party brand because they were seen as evidence of a larger network of corruption—and not isolated cases—that enabled the malfeasance revealed by these cases. Moreover, Ang presents a difference-in-difference design of district-level electoral outcomes for the presidential campaigns in 2012 and 2018 and show that PRI electoral losses were higher in states where a PRI governor was prosecuted. This effect is particularly strong in districts with higher internet access, since they were more likely to be exposed to the corruption information. This article contributes to our understanding of the PRI's historical loss but also to debates in comparative political behavior. While most corruption literature tends to focus on corruption scandals and their effect on vote choice (Botero *et al.*, 2015; Weitz-Shapiro and Winters, 2017; De Vries and Solaz, 2017), Ang's work analyzes the effect of systemic and widespread corruption, advancing our understanding of the conditions under which voters punish politicians' malfeasances.

Paul Johnson and Francisco Cantú evaluate patterns of nationalization across Mexican parties during the 1994-2018 period. While most theories predict that countries with many districts, federal institutions, and a presidential system are unlikely to have nationalized parties, the authors provide evidence that this is not always the case. The Mexican parties, in fact, have highly nationalized voting patterns likely explained by the fact that parties have centralized party organizations, which have control of the ballot access and financial resources. In terms of the 2018 presidential election, the results of the PAN and PRI were not followed by the vanishing of the national force of their vote; they report similar nationalization scores to those produced in the past. Morena scores are higher than any other party in terms of relative nationalization in 2018, showing that López Obrador's party did not disrupt the party system but followed an established trend in Mexican electoral competition. The authors also highlight the similarities of the nationalization levels for the PAN in 2006, PRI in 2012, and Morena in 2018. The three presidential campaigns created strong coattails that moved electoral support across districts in the same direction—in other words, the electoral behavior of the Mexican electorate follows national rather than local issues.

The next two articles provide important context to our understanding of Mexico's democracy amid the 2018 election, in terms of clientelism and the erosion of electoral institutions. Kenneth Greene and Alberto Simpser study vote buying attempts in the 2018 election. With innovative survey methodology, they find that the use of electoral clientelism have significantly increased since Mexico's transition to democracy. In fact, they report that 42 per cent of voters were offered some good or service by a political party during the campaign season (53 per cent if including campaign merchandise). These efforts were practiced by nearly all parties, included a variety of material offers, and involved millions of citizens. However,

their data also suggest that it is less clear if parties were successful in changing voters' behavior or even if citizens understood what parties asked to do in exchange for the electoral gifts. Regardless, while Mexico's democracy has successfully achieved free and fair elections, with strong institutions capable of rooting out fraud, and have parties with strong party reputations, there are systematic attempts made by parties to buy electoral support during campaigns. These efforts have not faded from Mexico politics after transitioning to democracy and, instead, are increasingly widespread as shown by Greene and Simpson's research.


Joy Langston highlights that most studies analyze why parties create autonomous electoral institutions to limit their actions, but few of them consider the strong incentives that parties have to cheat, manipulate or simply ignore the rules they helped creating. Her article presents evidence that after the country's democratization—similar to a case of regulatory capture—parties in Mexico were able to weaken electoral institutions (IFE-INE and the Electoral Tribunal). These efforts constituted maneuvers from simple pressure to outright malfeasance, such as placing allies in the IFE's leadership, threatening to reduce budgets, removing councilors or magistrates, changing the length of tenure, consistently bypassing campaign spending limits that they imposed on themselves, among others. Similarly, parties took advantage of different electoral reforms to impose higher costs on participation for smaller parties, ambitious politicians, and voters. As argued by Langston, this behavior of party leaders, along with other variables, helped lead to a massive rejection of the traditional three-party system in the 2018 election.

Finally, Víctor Hernández Huerta finds that the 2018 electoral process was the most violent in recent history in Mexico: 48 candidates were assassinated. In order to explain what was behind this wave of political assassinations, Hernández Huerta built a database of candidate killings from newspaper notes in all the states in which assassinations of candidates occurred during the 2017-2018 electoral cycle. His analysis finds that political violence was not a result of electoral competition but can be attributed to the activities of criminal organizations in the municipalities in which the murders occurred. In particular, his research finds that in some states the candidates were among civilian casualties in the midst of criminal violence that the country is experiencing. However, in states like Puebla and Guerrero, they seem to be targeted by criminal organizations. This research not only contributes to our understanding of the 2018 electoral process in Mexico but also provides new evidence of how criminal organizations get involved in the democratic process, as it is the case in other parts of the world as Italy, Brazil, or Colombia.

In addition, four research notes included in this special issue provide important analysis about campaigns and electoral behavior in 2018. First, Sebastián Garrido and Flavia Freidenberg present descriptive statistics about the results of the election. They show how the configuration of the party system changed after the 2018

election and offer an important historical perspective of the magnitude of the changes, particularly the massive shift of the vote and the reduction of party fragmentation. Ulises Beltrán analyzes campaign effects, particularly the role played by news coverage, political advertising of parties, and social media. Contrary to what sometimes is claimed by journalists or media commentators—but consistent with the academic literature on the “minimal effects” model of campaign influence—the author finds that voters’ media consumption, particularly from social media, had no significant effect on their electoral behavior.

Finally, two research notes analyze two important topics that can shape voters’ electoral behavior: religion and indigenous identity. Alejandro Díaz Domínguez studies why López Obrador attracted secularists but also many religious voters, particularly observant and traditionalist Catholic voters in the 2018 presidential election. As Díaz Domínguez argues, while Morena is a leftist party that championed support for the poor, promised to fight corruption and cut bureaucratic privileges, López Obrador also emphasized values and religious appeals during his campaign and sent a vague policy message on abortion and gay rights, which could have appealed observant and traditionalist Catholic voters. Interestingly, despite López Obrador’s electoral alliance with Encuentro Social, an Evangelical party, Díaz Domínguez did not find strong support for López Obrador among evangelicals; in fact, they were less likely to vote for him. Willibald Sonnleitner studies voting patterns of a topic rarely analyzed in studies of political behavior in Mexico: the indigenous vote. In particular, his analysis focuses on those electoral districts in which there is more than 40 per cent of an indigenous population. Sonnleitner finds that while these districts tend to report higher turnout rates they are not characterized by any specific political behavior; vote choice is mostly explained by sociodemographic factors, particularly levels of education.

Although this volume does not pretend to be exhaustive, the papers included in this special issue contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the different factors that shaped the outcome of the 2018 election in Mexico. We appreciate the collaboration of the authors of this issue: Melina Altamirano, Milena Ang, Ulises Beltrán, Francisco Cantú, Alejandro Díaz Domínguez, Flavia Freidenberg, Sebastián Garrido, Kenneth Greene, Víctor Hernández Huerta, Paul Johnson, Joy Langston, Sandra Ley, Alberto Simpser, and Willibald Sonnleitner. We also appreciate the contribution of anonymous reviewers and the participation of Álvaro López Lara, Eric Magar, Mariano Sánchez Talanquer, Salvador Vázquez del Mercado, Gerardo Maldonado, and Javier Márquez as discussants at the “Política y Gobierno” Special Workshop organized at CIDE on December of 2018 and April of 2019. We also want to thank Julio Ríos and Luis de la Calle, previous and current editor of *Política y Gobierno*, respectively, for the invitation to serve as the editors of this issue. Luis de la Calle helped us coordinate every stage of the volume. 

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The Economy, Security, and Corruption in the 2018 Presidential Election

Campaign Issues and Electoral Preferences in Mexico

Melina Altamirano and Sandra Ley*

ABSTRACT: Throughout Enrique Peña Nieto's administration and during the 2018 presidential campaign, three problems stood out among the Mexican electorate: the limited economic growth, a sustained increase in violence, and multiple corruption scandals. Therefore, based on the CIDE-CSES 2018 National Electoral Study, we analyze the *simultaneous* effects of individual evaluations of the economy, violence and corruption on electoral preferences. Our findings indicate the prevalence of a retrospective economic vote that coexists with a security vote, but without clear support from crime victims. Although corruption was widely discussed during the electoral campaign, this issue did not play a major role in voter preferences.

KEYWORDS: issue voting, elections, economic voting, security, corruption.

*Economía, seguridad y corrupción en la elección presidencial de 2018:
Temas de campaña y preferencias electorales en México*

RESUMEN: Durante la administración de Enrique Peña Nieto y la campaña presidencial de 2018 resaltaron tres problemas entre el electorado mexicano: un limitado crecimiento económico, un aumento sostenido de la violencia y múltiples escándalos de corrupción. Con base en el Estudio Nacional Electoral de México (CIDE-CSES) 2018, analizamos los efectos *simultáneos* de las evaluaciones individuales respecto a la economía, la violencia y la corrupción sobre las preferencias electorales. Nuestros hallazgos indican la prevalencia de un voto económico retrospectivo que coexiste con un voto de seguridad. Las evaluaciones negativas de la seguridad favorecieron al candidato puntero, aunque sin un claro respaldo de las víctimas. A pesar de su centralidad en la campaña electoral, el tema de la corrupción no afectó sustantivamente las preferencias del votante.

PALABRAS CLAVE: voto temático, elecciones, voto económico, seguridad, corrupción.

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Enrique Peña Nieto's administration was permeated by multiple controversies regarding the economy, security and corruption. The implementation of labor, energy, economic competition, and telecommunications reforms, among others, placed president Peña Nieto on the cover of *Time* magazine in early 2014. In the fall of that year, however, his administration was facing its worst crisis, due to the disappearance of the 43 students from the Ayotzinapa Teachers' College and the conflict of interest investigation also known as the *Casa Blanca* scandal. As a result, the country's economy and security, in addition to corruption, were three issues that did not go unnoticed by the media and were constantly discussed throughout the 2018 presidential campaign. The economic reforms implemented during the six-year term were subject to constant public discussion. In contrast to the 2012 election, security became a major topic of presidential debates, with diverging proposals, ranging from an iron fist approach, to social prevention policies. Also, the candidates from the three major parties were involved in corruption scandals during the election campaign.

Given this multiplicity of debates and concerns, it is important to understand how Mexican voters took the country's economic, security and corruption situation into account to define their electoral preferences. What factors mediated the consideration of economic, political and social issues in voting decisions? Which issues prevailed in the evaluation of the different candidates for voting intentions, particularly for the winning candidate? And, for which group of voters was one issue more important than another when casting their vote? These are some of the questions we address in this article, with a specific focus on the 2018 elections in Mexico. The analysis of the determinants of electoral preferences is crucial to understand the results of this electoral process, which points to a reconfiguration of Mexico's party system. However, at a theoretical level, our motivation and research questions revolve around the simultaneous role that economic and non-economic issues play in voting decisions, and the possibility of identifying the different issue publics that are mobilized in response to three important topics: the economy, security and corruption.

The analysis of these features of the electoral behavior among voters during Mexico's past presidential election is relevant for both theoretical and practical reasons. Multiple studies have revealed the limitations faced by voters when demanding accountability from their government authorities due to a lack of information (Holbrook and Garand, 1996; Aidt, 2000) and the subsequent media interpretation of the available information (Hetherington, 1996), along with the complex responsibility attribution processes voters face when deciding who to reward or punish at the polling station (Gélineau and Remmer, 2006; Arceneaux, 2006; Hobolt *et al.*, 2013). Additionally, although the economy is usually a major factor in electoral decisions, recent works show that, in times of political crisis, other priorities define voting decisions (Singer, 2011), though these may differ from voter to voter (Krosnick, 1990). Together, these findings suggest that electoral behavior may have important

consequences related to accountability and to the policies that will prevail among subsequent governments. In the longer term, electoral preferences and outcomes have fundamental implications for the citizens' future well-being.

One limitation of this literature, however, has an empirical nature. Due to the restrictions in the design and availability of surveys, it is difficult to simultaneously evaluate the role that different social problems—beyond the economy—play in electoral behavior. However, these issues rarely arise in isolation. For example, criminal violence in Latin America is often accompanied by corruption and can also have profound economic effects. In terms of accountability, it is then necessary to identify which dimension weighs most heavily on the electorate. Without a rigorous and comparative analysis, we could over or underestimate the effect of each issue on electoral results. In this article we analyze the post-electoral survey of the CIDE-CSES 2018 National Electoral Study,¹ an instrument that allows us to examine, within the same study, the effects of voters' evaluations of the economy, security, and corruption on electoral preferences and to weigh their impact on individual voting decisions.

In order to understand the logic of the Mexican vote in the last presidential election, we organized the article as follows. First, we present a brief review of the literature on economic and non-economic voting and the main findings that guide our work. Next, we present our argument and hypotheses. Later, we review the main issues that marked the 2018 presidential campaign and their evolution. We then describe our research design and present our results. Finally, we discuss our conclusions and the implications of our findings.

Our results allow us to understand the Mexican voter at a historic political juncture. The evidence presented here points to the prevalence of a retrospective economic vote among the Mexican electorate, a finding in line with previous analyses of past elections (Buendía, 1996, 2000; Poiré, 1999; Beltrán, 2003, 2015; Singer, 2009). However, given the increase of violence in the country, we also find that such an economic vote coexists with a security vote: negative evaluations due to the situation of insecurity favored the leading candidate, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), for Morena, although crime victims seem to have had reservations about his proposals and did not widely support him. Furthermore, although the issue of corruption was present in the campaign, particularly in the winning candidate's discourse, this was not the main issue on which Mexican voters based their electoral decision, nor was it a determining factor in Andrés Manuel López Obrador's victory. Therefore, this article contributes to a strict evaluation of the logic of the economic and issue voting and offers the possibility of identifying the different issue publics that prevailed or lost relevance in the 2018 election.

¹ Given the panel design of this survey, we took advantage of some of the data collected in different waves to complement information on some variables.

ECONOMIC VOTING VS. NON-ECONOMIC VOTING

Previous works on economic voting predict that voters, characterized as rational individuals, will decide to reward the ruling party during economic good times and punish it during an economic crisis or decline (Fiorina, 1978). This prediction is based on two assumptions: 1) that economic conditions provide voters with information about political actors and 2) that economic conditions indicate government capacity (Dorussen and Palmer, 2002). In addition, economic voting models assume that voters can easily evaluate economic performance, because the consequences are tangible and reflected in their daily lives. Despite the rationality of economic voting and the vast empirical evidence related to it, there are important limitations.

To analyze the impact of economic conditions on electoral outcomes, one must take into account the political, institutional and social contextual features in which elections take place (Powell and Whitten, 1993; Pacek and Radcliff, 1995; Anderson, 2000, 2007). For economic models to work, the management of the economy must be a major concern. However, this depends on the individual psycho-sociological context (Krosnick, 1990; Dorussen and Palmer, 2002).

During economic good times or periods of great political or institutional turmoil, voters are more likely to turn their attention to other non-economic issues (Singer, 2011). Comparative policy research has shown that in elections that occur in the midst of government crises involving corruption, human rights violations or terrorist attacks, voters do not pay as much attention to the economy (Bali, 2007; Kibris, 2011; Singer, 2011).

Even in the midst of a major governance crisis, voters assign varying degrees of importance to an issue, depending on their own personal concerns and experiences (Krosnick, 1990). The importance of issues is critical to accountability. If a non-economic issue is not relevant to voters, they will not take it into account when deciding who to vote for or when evaluating the authorities in office. According to Krosnick (1990), this means that there are multiple “issue publics” within the electorate—each of them is composed of citizens who are especially concerned with a single issue, either because it affects a relevant interest or a personal value. For example, a teacher might be more focused on the candidates’ proposals for education and decide his or her vote based on that dimension.

There are two non-economic issues that have attracted the attention of experts in electoral behavior in recent years: crime and corruption.² These are visible issues

²Other non-economic issues that have generated research on their impact on electoral preferences include natural disasters: Arceneaux and Stein (2006), Gasper and Reeves (2011); terrorism: Bali (2007), Berrebi and Klor (2008), Kibris (2011); and war casualties: Gelpi *et al.* (2005); Karol and Miguel (2007), among others.

with profound economic, social, and political consequences for voters.³ Both issues are also widely covered by the media and are often mentioned by politicians in their speeches, so that voters are often exposed to what is happening in terms of both insecurity and corruption, making them more aware of these issues (Chiricos *et al.*, 2000; Altheide, 2002; Ferraz and Finan, 2008; Chang *et al.*, 2010).

Despite the relevance of these issues, the existing evidence suggests that it is only under very particular conditions that voters punish parties for criminal violence or corruption and that, consequently, the chances of making the government electorally accountable for these issues are relatively limited. On the one hand, voters punish their rulers when insecurity is associated with organized crime and there is a partisan alignment that facilitates their accountability attribution process (Ley, 2017). Additionally, previous works reveal that victims of crime do not show statistically significant effects on electoral support (Ley, 2017) or presidential approval (Romero *et al.*, 2016), perhaps because victims tend to disengage from the electoral process and stop participating in elections (Ley, 2018). On the other hand, when corruption is widespread—as it is in Latin America—it is difficult for voters to identify politicians who are not corrupt; because of this, they disregard this issue (Pavão, 2018), and prioritize other social needs in their electoral decision (Boas *et al.*, 2018). Thus, the issue of corruption can influence the vote only when the source reporting on corruption scandals is credible (Botero *et al.*, 2015) and voters are politically sophisticated enough to process such information (Weitz and Winters, 2017).

Considering the limitations that voters have in considering the different issues that directly affect them when casting their votes, this article seeks to examine the extent to which perceptions of economic performance, security, and corruption determined the voting decision in the 2018 Mexican presidential election.

ARGUMENT

This article seeks to contribute to the literature on economic and issue voting based on the Mexican case and the most recent presidential election (2018).

Based on the theories of economic voting, we assume that economic evaluations were among the most important determinants of the electoral preferences in Mexico's 2018 electoral process, particularly those regarding the national economy, given our focus on the federal election. In fact, evidence on the Mexican case points to the widespread prevalence of an economic vote among the electorate since the 1990s (Buendía, 1996, 2000; Poiré, 1999; Beltrán, 2003, 2015; Singer, 2009). However, considering that, in recent years, economic fluctuations coexist with non-eco-

³ On the socio-economic and political consequences of criminal activity, see Ashby and Ramos (2013), Robles *et al.* (2013), Carreras (2013), Caudillo and Torche (2014), Brown and Velásquez (2017), Brown (2018), Ley (2018), and Trejo and Ley (2019). On the economic and political effects of corruption, see Mauro (1995, 1998), Rose-Ackerman (1999), Wei (1999), Mishler and Rose (2001), and Seligson (2002).

conomic phenomena such as criminal violence and corruption scandals —following the theory of issue publics (Krosnick, 1990)—, we consider it likely that Mexican voters also directed their attention to non-economic issues when defining their voting intentions, particularly toward those issues affecting them directly and that were relevant during the campaign. Based on these theoretical expectations, we propose to explore the following hypotheses. We first focus on electoral preferences regarding the candidate of the incumbent party:

H1a. The better the evaluation of economic performance, the greater the likelihood of supporting the ruling government's candidate.

H1b. The better the evaluation of public safety performance, the greater the probability of supporting the ruling government's candidate.

H1c. Direct experiences with crime and insecurity (victimization) are associated with diminished support for the ruling government's candidate.

H1d. The better the evaluation of performance in corruption, the more likely it is to support the ruling government's candidate.

In a complementary manner, and focusing on the factors that could have influenced the victory of the winning opposition candidate in the 2018 election, we propose the following:

H2a. The better the evaluation of economic performance, the less likely it is to support the winning candidate of the opposing party.

H2b. The better the evaluation of public security performance, the less likely it is to support for the winning candidate of the opposing party.

H2c. The better the evaluation of performance in corruption, the less likely it is to support for the winning candidate of the opposing party.

Although the hypotheses presented here follow the logic of consolidated studies in the literature on electoral behavior, we reiterate the value of analyzing the impact of three topics of major theoretical and practical importance on electoral preferences within the same study, and thus to be able to evaluate their effect in a comparative fashion. As we explain in detail below, the data on which this study is based offers this possibility. Beyond this empirical contribution, we propose the identification of issue publics (Krosnick, 1990) for each of these concerns, whose characteristics —as we argue— could enhance the relevance of each topic and its effects on electoral preferences.

First, with respect to the economy, we consider that, given the structure of the labor market in Mexico, the informal sector is the most vulnerable group due to the lack of access to health care, retirement savings plans, housing loans and childcare services, among others (Alba Vega and Kruijt, 1995, Altamirano, 2019). Therefore, we argue that informality conditions the effect of economic evaluations.

H.3a. Individual economic vulnerability conditions the effect of economic evaluations.

With regard to security, we propose that it is especially the direct victims of criminal violence who give greater weight to their security assessments when expressing their electoral preferences.

H3b. Direct experiences with crime condition the effect of security evaluations.

Finally, while it is difficult to identify a group that is particularly affected by corruption due to its wide dissemination within the Mexican political system, the existing evidence clearly points to political sophistication as a relevant individual characteristic that conditions the effect of corruption issues on electoral behavior (Weitz and Winters, 2017). Politically sophisticated voters have the capacity to process information about acts of corruption and to incorporate it into the definition of their vote. Therefore, although there is not a specific issue public with respect to corruption, we propose the existence of a possible public that is particularly sensitive, attentive, and mobilized regarding the issue of corruption.

H3c. Individual information levels condition the effect of corruption evaluations.

Overall, we argue that performance evaluations of the economy, security, and corruption influenced the electoral preferences of the Mexican electorate in 2018, but with particular impact among voters in the informal sector, victims of crime and politically informed individuals, respectively. Based on these theoretical expectations, we provide a brief account of the 2018 presidential campaign and present our empirical analysis in the following sections.

THE ISSUES OF THE 2018 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

The balance of Enrique Peña Nieto's administration

Between 2012 and 2014, the Congress approved 11 structural reforms: fiscal, financial, energy, education, telecommunications, economic competition, transparency, labor, criminal justice, political-electoral, and a new legal protection (*amparo*) law. In general terms, the purpose of these initiatives was to accelerate the country's economic growth and development. Thus, this set of reforms won former president Enrique Peña Nieto the cover of *Time* magazine, emphasizing his work toward "saving Mexico." These initiatives, however, faced many problems in terms of implementation (Flores-Macías, 2016; Arroyo *et al.*, 2018). The fiscal reform fell short of its tax collection objectives; the energy reform was affected by the decline in oil prices; the education reform faced enormous protests and consequent problems in the implementation of the proposed teachers' evaluation; and the telecommunications reform lent itself to clientelistic practices, among other problems

(Flores-Macías, 2016). More importantly, overall, poverty, inequality, and lack of social mobility continued to mark the Mexican economy (Arroyo *et al.*, 2018). Additionally, by 2017, gasoline was no longer subsidized, resulting in Peña Nieto's lowest level of presidential approval during his administration.

In terms of security, president Peña Nieto's administration had multiple challenges. In his first year of government, he faced the flourishing of self-defense groups in 13 of the country's 32 states (Phillips, 2017), thus generating non-governmental armed organizations that added to the complexity of violence in the country. Although Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán was captured in February 2014—in parallel to the series of reforms that strengthened the president's image—the drug trafficker escaped a year later, in July 2015. His escape followed the biggest disaster of the Peña Nieto's presidency: the disappearance of the 43 students from Ayotzinapa, with clear involvement of authorities at different levels of government, in collusion with organized crime. A clumsy and unfortunate handling of the events by Attorney General Jesús Murillo Karam further complicated this scenario when he infamously declared he had “had enough” and was “fed up” (*ya me cansé*) in front of the media and thousands of victims who had tirelessly searched for their relatives for years, along with the parents of the 43. In fact, during the Peñista administration, homicides rose to more than 100 000 and more than 21 000 people disappeared (Cacelin, 2018), making it the most violent six-year period in recent history.

Following the failure of structural reforms and the escalation of violence, the president faced two major corruption scandals involving two of his closest associates: the first lady, Angélica Rivera, and the Secretary of Finance, Luis Videgaray. Several news reports revealed that both individuals acquired expensive real estate through Grupo Higa, a company that had benefited extensively from contracts with the federal government (*Aristegui Noticias*, 2014; Montes, 2014). The president ordered an investigation into the matter, but also chose the person in charge, Virgilio Andrade Martínez. Andrade's final report did not identify any conflict of interest. Thus, any commitment made by the president to the fight against corruption and impunity was publicly perceived as completely empty.

As a result of this series of scandals and problems, Enrique Peña Nieto's presidential approval rating quickly plummeted from 56 per cent at the start of his administration in February 2013 to 26 per cent just before the presidential election in May 2018 (Buendía&Laredo, 2018). Thus, not only did the PRI arrive to the election with a huge credibility deficit in the eyes of the electorate, but, given the performance of the federal government, economic problems, violence, and corruption were, to some extent, present in the minds of voters.

According to data from CIDE-CSES 2018 National Electoral Study, one month before the presidential election, 44 per cent of Mexicans considered that insecurity and other associated problems such as crime, homicides, and drug trafficking were

the country's main problem; while for 36 per cent, economic issues such as unemployment, inflation, and poverty were the main concern. Despite wide coverage and discussion of corruption, only 9 per cent of the population considered it to be the country's main problem, although it is important to note that 82 per cent considered corruption to be widespread in the country. From Krosnick's (1990) point of view, this would suggest that there was a public widely concerned with the issues of insecurity and economy, probably due to direct effects on personal and family welfare, while corruption, having more diffuse effects, might not have generated a public specifically mobilized by the issue.

Regardless of the priorities within the electorate, given the diverse agenda and scandals of the Peña Nieto administration, it is crucial to know how these different issues were addressed during the presidential campaign. It should be noted that, although in this study we do not intend to evaluate the effect of the campaigns,⁴ knowing their contents is fundamental in order to identify the possible differentiation between candidates for each of the three issues we examine here and to better understand their impact on electoral preferences. In the following section, we briefly examine the candidates' attention and proposals on the issues of economy, security, and corruption.

The 2018 presidential campaign

The 2018 electoral process was characterized, among other things, by three elements that, to some extent, distinguish it from previous processes: 1) the first PAN-PRD alliance for a presidential candidacy; 2) the participation of independent candidates; but, above all, 3) a new party (Morena) that not only competed in the presidential election, but also, despite its short history, led the polls from the beginning of the campaign. With respect to this last element, it is important to note that the electoral success of new parties in both recent and established democracies has been associated, to a large extent, with their ability to take advantage of problems of representation in the face of the emergence of new cleavages among the electorate (Harmel and Robertson, 1985; Kitschelt, 1988), as well as of the poor performance of ruling authorities (Tavits, 2007). Therefore—and given the low approval of Enrique Peña Nieto—it becomes even more relevant to consider the proposals made by the different candidates, particularly Morena, in the 2018 campaign.

On the economic front, the leading candidate, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (Morena) offered to return to the stabilizing development model of the 1960s, refocusing priorities in current spending and favoring investment in scholarships for young people who neither study nor work, therefore placing “the poor first”. The

⁴The analysis of the exposure and impact of the campaign messages is beyond the scope of our study. However, other articles in this special issue focus specifically on those effects.

Morena candidate also emphasized the need to revise the structural reforms implemented by the Peñista administration, particularly those related to energy and education. In contrast, José Antonio Meade (PRI) did not propose changes but rather a continuity of the Peñista administration's economic model and reforms. Ricardo Anaya's (PAN) economic proposal focused on establishing a universal basic income and raising the minimum wage, while independent candidate Jaime Rodríguez Calderón proposed eliminating the minimum wage.

Although security is an issue where candidates and voters converge on the importance and necessity of the fight against crime (a valence issue), this was also an issue of wide contrasts in terms of the candidates' proposals. While Ricardo Anaya and José Antonio Meade insisted on maintaining the participation of the armed forces to fight organized crime, Andrés Manuel López Obrador's emphasis was on addressing the root causes of insecurity: corruption and poverty. López Obrador's proposal also included an amnesty law for those who participated in illegal activities out of necessity or forced by organized crime —*e.g.* peasants who grew poppies or teenagers who collaborated with drug trafficking gangs. López Obrador's offer contrasted sharply with that of independent candidate Jaime Rodríguez Calderón, who, among other measures, proposed militarizing high schools to discipline teenagers, and cutting off criminals' hands.

It is possible that the Morenista candidate's differentiation in terms of his security proposals, focused on addressing the roots of violence and an amnesty law—in contrast to the PRI and PAN candidates' bet on the continuity of the military strategy or the heavy-handed option of “El Bronco”—placed him in the position of being evaluated among voters on this particular issue. The expectation in this regard, however, is ambiguous. Despite offering a different proposal in terms of security, a large sector of victims rejected the idea of an amnesty (Barragán, 2018), which became the subject of multiple debates and political ad spots (*Reporte Índigo*, 2018).

As far as corruption is concerned, it was the candidate for Morena in particular who focused much of his discourse on this issue, emphasizing the importance of removing privileges for high-level officials, the possibility of prosecuting the president and revoking his mandate through a referendum. In this regard, López Obrador tried to characterize himself as an outsider of the political system in order to make his commitment to the fight against corruption credible, and to position the issue in his campaign platform. At the same time, the PRI candidate focused on the presentation of seven different types of tax returns and official statements for public servants in order to inform of their personal and family wealth. The PAN candidate's proposal highlighted his insistence on the elimination of the use of cash in government operations. Finally, “El Bronco” captured the media attention with his proposal to cut off the hands of officials involved in embezzlement of public funds.

It should be noted that, despite their proposals to fight corruption, the four candidates were confronted personally for being involved in scandals of greater or lesser scope throughout the campaign or during their periods of public service. Ricardo Anaya was accused of money laundering. José Antonio Meade was questioned for diversion of public resources in the Ministry of Social Development (Sedesol) during his tenure as head of the agency. López Obrador formed alliances with people who were controversial because of their history of fraud accusations, such as Napoleón Gómez Urrutia. Jaime Rodríguez Calderón was accused by the electoral authority of forging signatures to obtain his candidacy.

Thus, the perception of high and widespread corruption and allegations of corrupt practices among the four candidates may have diminished the weight of this problem (Pavão, 2018), in addition to making it difficult to differentiate between candidates, which is crucial for a specific issue to become important in an election (Krosnick, 1990). However, the leading candidate's emphasis on the issue of corruption may have made it relevant to the voters' decision or at least to the evaluation of Morena as a viable electoral alternative.

The balance

In the 2006 election, the campaign focused mainly on the characterization of López Obrador as a danger to Mexico. In 2012, contrary to expectations, the issue of security was not a prominent theme of the campaign, despite the escalation of violence throughout the previous administration. However, in 2018, both issues—the perceived “threat” of López Obrador and insecurity—were present, along with broader debates about the economy and corruption. Moreover, as surveys show, the economy, security and corruption were somehow present in the minds of the voters. And whether these public concerns shaped the candidates' references to them or, on the contrary, the candidates encouraged voters to think about these issues, the fact is that all three issues were present from the beginning to the end of the election campaign, with significant contrasts among the four candidates. It is therefore crucial to understand the extent to which perceptions of the economy, security and corruption played a role in the electoral preferences of the electorate.

It is also worth noting that it was particularly the candidate for Morena—as part of a new party in the political arena at the federal level—who offered the greatest contrast of proposals on the three issues reviewed, seeking to address specific groups of the electorate who might have felt relegated or underrepresented under the government in office. This behavior is in line with the expectations of the literature on new parties, which tend to address new cleavages among the electorate and have a greater chance of electoral success in a context of poor or deficient government performance (Tavits, 2007). Thus, our empirical analysis also seeks to examine the extent to which the different dimensions of disapproval or dissatisfaction

of Mexican voters, given the performance of the Peña Nieto administration, contributed to the electoral victory of Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

RESEARCH DESIGN

To study the effect of campaign issues on electoral preferences, we used individual data from the CIDE-CSES 2018 National Electoral Study. This project consisted of panel surveys conducted at three points in the 2018 federal election process: two pre-election surveys and one post-election survey.⁵ The survey we used corresponds to the post-electoral period and is representative of the Mexican population at a national level.⁶ In addition to information on the electoral decision of the voters, this wave includes questions that refer to the evaluation of the situation of the economy, security, and corruption, the three thematic dimensions that we address in our argument. Therefore, as we have previously mentioned, this survey has unique characteristics that allow us to evaluate the impact of three crucial issues—from a theoretical and public policy standpoint—on electoral preferences in the most objective and comparative way.

We conducted our analysis in two stages. First, we used a multinomial model to estimate the effect of issue evaluations on electoral preferences with respect to the ruling party candidate. This analysis allows us to compare the differentiated weight of each of the issues in voters' decisions to change or keep the ruling party in the government and the relative gains of the opposition parties in each of the thematic agendas. The second set of models deepens the analysis of the determinants of the vote for the candidate representing Morena to explore the specific effect of perceptions on the economy in comparison with the issues highlighted in his campaign: corruption and security.

Dependent variable: Electoral preferences

Consistent with previous studies, we measure citizens' electoral preference with a question that asks respondents to indicate the party or candidate for which they voted in the last presidential election. This question is posed with a paper ballot similar to the one used on Election Day. Interviewees mark their choice and place the ballot in a box, so that the interviewer cannot immediately see which option they chose. Compared to other possible question formats, this option increases the likelihood that respondents will genuinely indicate how they voted. On the basis of this question, we first generate a variable that takes different values according to

⁵The two pre-election surveys were conducted in March and June 2018, respectively, and the post-election survey was conducted one week after the July 2018 election.

⁶The ENEM, 2018 post-electoral survey consisted on the application of 1 239 effective surveys to respondents over 18 years old and was conducted face-to-face in households across the national territory. The survey was carried out on the basis of a probability sample of electoral sections.

the interviewee's electoral preference: 1 if they voted for PAN/Ricardo Anaya; 2 if they voted for PRI/José Antonio Meade; 3 if they voted for Morena/Andrés Manuel López Obrador, and 4 if they voted for the independent candidate Jaime Ramírez "El Bronco". This categorical variable is the dependent variable in our multinomial model. For the logistic models of electoral preference for the winning candidate, we generate a new dependent variable from the previous one, which takes a value of 1 if the interviewee voted for Morena/Andrés Manuel López Obrador and 0 if he voted for any other party or candidate.

Independent variables: Evaluation of the economy, security, and corruption

To operationalize citizens' perceptions on key issues in the electoral process, we use evaluations of the national situation and, if available, of the personal situation or the voter's direct experience. Higher values of these variables indicate more negative evaluations. In the case of questions related to the economic situation, we used two standard questions for retrospective evaluation. First, the sociotropic evaluation ("Would you say that during the last 12 months the economic situation of Mexico...?"), with a response scale ranging from 1 (improved) to 4 (worsened); and, second, the egotropic evaluation ("Would you say that during the last 12 months your personal economic situation...?"), with a response scale ranging from 1 (improved considerably) to 5 (worsened considerably).⁷ To measure the effect of economic vulnerability associated with the informal sector, we constructed a variable that takes a value of 1 if the interviewee is a beneficiary of either of the two major public health care systems (IMSS or the ISSSTE) and 0 if he or she does not have access to the services provided by these institutions. Given the structure of the labor market in Mexico, eligibility for either social security institution indicates membership in the formal sector, which is associated with a series of benefits such as health care, retirement savings plans, housing loans, and childcare services, among others (Ghai, 2003; Benería and Floro, 2006). Therefore, the economic vulnerability is greater among the population that lacks access to social security services.

For the issue of security, we include the national retrospective evaluation ("Would you say that, during the last twelve months, public security in the country...?") with a response scale ranging from 1 (improved considerably) to 5 (worsened considerably). To assess the effect of personal experiences with crime, we use the following question: "Please tell me if you or a family member or friend have been a direct victim of any of these crimes in the last 12 months" Affirmative responses take a value of 1 and a value of 0 is assigned if no victimization experience is reported in the last year.

⁷The evaluation of the personal economic situation was not included in the third wave of the ENEM 2018 panel, so we used the question that was included in the first wave.

To capture perceptions regarding the issue of corruption, we used a question that asks about the situation of this problem in the country: “With respect to the previous six years, do you think that corruption in Mexico has decreased or increased?” Possible responses follow a scale of 1 (decreased) to 5 (increased). In the set of models that deepen the analysis of the electoral preference for the candidate representing Morena, we include an item asking about the credibility of specific accusations in his case: Tell me, how true or false do you think it is that Andrés Manuel López Obrador got together with corrupt politicians like Elba Esther Gordillo and Napoleón Gómez Urrutia in exchange for support for his campaign? This variable takes the value of 1 if the interviewees believe that the accusation is true/very true, and 0 if they consider it to be false.⁸

Finally, we constructed a variable that takes the value of 1 if the interviewee considers the accusations of corruption involving Ricardo Anaya and José Antonio Meade to be credible (true/very true), and 0 if the accusations do not seem credible in either case.⁹ With this variable we seek to capture the effect of a widespread perception of corruption among the candidates who competed against Andrés Manuel López Obrador. Specifically, we are interested in finding out if this perception conditioned a possible negative electoral impact of the accusations against the leading candidate.

Controls

Previous studies show the relevance of several individual political characteristics in order to understand the logic of the voters’ electoral decisions. One of the main determinants of voting is party identification. In the multinomial models we include dichotomous variables to indicate the identification with each of the main parties: PAN, PRD, PRI and Morena (with a value of 1 if the interviewee identifies with the party and 0 if not). In addition to party identification, the ideological orientation of the voters can have an independent effect on their electoral decision. To measure this dimension, we include the position of the interviewee on the liberal-conservative scale (with a value of 0 if the interviewee identifies with the left and 10 if he or she identifies with the right).

We also control for a set of sociodemographic variables. We include the gender of the interviewee and his/her age. The variable of years of formal education can approximate the effect of the level of information and political sophistication of the interviewees.¹⁰ Finally, we include an index that captures the level of political

⁸ The survey did not include questions on respondents’ direct experiences with corruption.

⁹ The specific questions for both candidates are: 1) Tell me, how true or false do you think it is that José Antonio Meade covered up government corruption scandals? and 2) Tell me, how true or false do you think it is that Ricardo Anaya used his political career to get rich?

¹⁰ While the education variable captures part of the socioeconomic status in Mexico, we ran a series of additional models with two measures that approximate the level of wealth of individuals. First, we added a self-reported income variable (which, by its nature, has a high level of non-response). In an-

awareness of the interviewee. This is an additive index based on three questions regarding knowledge of the Mexican political system.¹¹ Table A1 in the Appendix shows the descriptive statistics of the variables included in the models.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the results of the multilevel model of electoral preferences. The reference category is the vote for the ruling party, PRI/José Antonio Meade. The estimate shows that a negative evaluation of the economy increased the preference for Ricardo Anaya and Andrés Manuel López Obrador, compared to the ruling party's candidate. The negative perception of the personal economic situation, however, only favored López Obrador. In this model, the negative evaluation of corruption had a positive effect on electoral support for Ricardo Anaya and López Obrador, compared to the candidate of the PRI.

TABLE 1. Multinomial model: Campaign and voting issues regarding the governing party in 2018

	PAN/Anaya Vote	Morena/AMLO Vote	Independent/Bronco Vote
National economy evaluation	0.405** (3.18)	0.655*** (5.55)	0.372 (1.26)
Personal economy evaluation	-0.0214 (-0.21)	0.246** (2.61)	-0.291 (-1.28)
National security evaluation	0.0783 (0.74)	0.251** (2.59)	0.254 (1.00)
Victim	0.193 (0.78)	-0.142 (-0.61)	1.415** -2.89
National corruption evaluation	0.263* (2.46)	0.216* (2.24)	-0.0813 (-0.32)
PAN identification	0.503 (1.73)	-0.291 (-1.01)	-0.889 (-1.28)
PRD identification	0.627 (1.19)	0.085 (0.17)	-14.46 (-0.01)
Morena identification	-0.283 (-1.02)	0.0819 (0.34)	-1.002 (-1.64)
PRI identification	-1.068*** (-3.56)	-1.345*** (-4.93)	-15.77 (-0.02)

other set of models, we added an index of socioeconomic level calculated from a battery of questions about goods and services available in the respondent's home. The results of these specifications are reported in Tables A2-A5 in the Appendix.

¹¹ The questions are 1) Can you please tell me the name of the current Governor of your state? 2) In general, how many years does a congressperson's term last? and 3) Given what you know, which are the chambers of the Mexican Congress?

TABLE 1. Multinomial model: Campaign and voting issues regarding the governing party in 2018 (continuation)

	PAN/Anaya Vote	Morena/AMLO Vote	Independent/Bronco Vote
Liberal-Conservative	0.023 (0.54)	-0.0763* (-1.98)	-0.136 (-1.54)
Female	-0.33 (-1.58)	-0.458* (-2.39)	-0.477 (-1.01)
Age	-0.0151* (-2.02)	-0.0135* (-2.01)	-0.0423* (-2.30)
Education	0.146 (1.24)	-0.00681 (-0.06)	-0.177 (-0.62)
Constant	-1.672 (-1.96)	-2.112** (-2.69)	0.702 (-0.36)
Number of observations		966	
Pseudo R ²		0.12	

Source: Authors' elaboration based on CIDE-CSES 2018 National Electoral Study (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020). *Note:* Multinomial model with PRI/Meade vote as reference category. The variables of party identification and personal economic situation were included in wave 1. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, t -statistics in brackets.

The security evaluation is not significant in the comparison between José Antonio Meade and Ricardo Anaya, but it is significant in the decision to vote for López Obrador instead of supporting the ruling party.

Direct experiences with crime did not have a significant effect in the case of Ricardo Anaya and Andrés Manuel López Obrador, but they did have an effect in the comparison with independent candidate Jaime Rodríguez. Finally, as expected, voters who identified with the PRI were less likely to vote for the candidates of the PAN and Morena-led coalitions.

The results of this first multinomial model point to a differentiated effect of the issues that were at the center of the 2018 federal election campaign. The first finding is that perceptions about the state of the economy were a central dimension in voters' decisions.

Dissatisfaction with the state of the country's economy favored candidates from opposition parties (H1a). The worsening of the personal situation translated into specific support for the candidate representing Morena, taking the ruling party as a reference. The deterioration of the security situation also had an uneven effect on the relative loss of support for the PRI (H1b).

The negative evaluations of national security favored the candidate for Morena, but not that of the PAN. When compared to the ruling party's candidate, those with direct experience of crime tended to favor the independent candidate. It is possible

that this last finding can be explained by the iron fist proposal of “El Bronco”, which would resonate with recent work such as that of Visconti (2019), who finds that victims are more likely to support this type of security policies. Finally, voters who perceived a worsening of corruption did favor candidates Anaya and López Obrador over candidate Meade (H1d).

TABLE 2. Logit model: Campaign issues and voting for the candidate representing Morena

	Modelo 1	Modelo 2	Modelo 3
National economy evaluation	0.442*** (4.49)	0.472*** (4.25)	0.380** (3.25)
Personal economy evaluation	0.322*** (3.80)	0.370*** (4.01)	0.326** (3.26)
National security evaluation	0.210** (3.12)	0.249** (3.03)	0.281** (2.64)
Victim	-0.346* (-2.56)	-0.320* (-2.35)	-0.250 (-1.53)
National corruption evaluation	0.0627 (0.74)	0.106 (1.19)	-0.0261 (-0.25)
Corruption <small>AMLO</small>		-1.309*** (-6.12)	-0.552** (-2.68)
Corruption opposition (Anaya and Meade)			1.843*** (6.59)
Corruption <small>AMLO</small> x Corruption opposition			-1.546*** (-3.31)
Morena identification	0.550** (2.58)	0.508* (2.23)	0.420 (1.70)
Liberal-Conservative	-0.0743* (-2.30)	-0.0802* (-2.53)	-0.0509 (-1.46)
Female	-0.229 (-1.62)	-0.323 (-1.86)	-0.270 (-1.50)
Age	-0.00283 (-0.72)	-0.00464 (-0.96)	-0.00378 (-0.74)
Education	-0.0625 (-0.74)	-0.0788 (-0.84)	-0.000623 (-0.01)
Constant	-2.801*** (-4.38)	-2.670*** (-3.81)	-2.987*** (-4.09)
Number of observations	966	865	804
Pseudo R ²	0.09	0.17	0.23

Source: Authors' elaboration based on CIDE-CSES 2018 National Electoral Study (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020). *Note:* Logit model. The variables of party identification and personal economic situation were included in wave 1. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, t -statistics in brackets.

The second set of models deepens the analysis of the factors underlying the specific vote for the candidate representing Morena. Table 2 presents the logistical estimates of the electoral preference for Andrés Manuel López Obrador. Model 1 considers the effects of the independent variables included in the multinomial specification. Model 2 includes the additional variable of credibility of the accusations regarding possible links between the candidate for Morena and characters identified in corruption scandals. Model 3 introduces the perception of corruption allegations against candidates opposing López Obrador and an interactive term for the two variables (credibility of AMLO's corruption allegations and credibility of Ana-ya/Meade's corruption allegations).

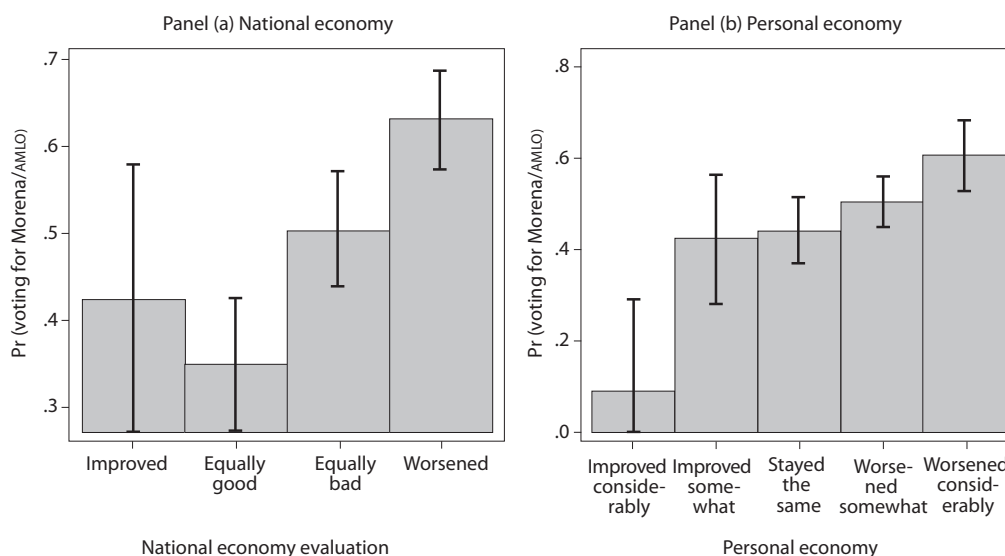
The results confirm the centrality of the economic dimension in the electoral support of the candidate for Morena. Individuals with negative evaluations of the national economic situation were more likely to express that they voted for López Obrador, as are those who perceived a deterioration in their personal economic situation—according to our expectations under H2a.¹² The effect of both evaluations is significant and robust to alternative specifications (see Tables A4 and A5 in the Appendix). Table A6 reports similar results controlling for the (dis)agreement with President Peña Nieto's administration.

Figure 1 reports the estimated probabilities of voting for the candidate representing Morena for different levels of evaluation of the national economic situation (Panel a) and the personal economic situation (Panel b), keeping the rest of the variables at their average values. The panel on the left (a) shows that the main effect occurs between the “*equally good*” category and the most negative evaluation: “*worsened*”. The intervals corresponding to the most positive evaluation (“*improved*”) are larger and overlap with the intervals estimated for the other evaluations. It should be noted that the most positive category has a small number of cases, as the observations on this variable are concentrated at the most negative end.

The panel on the right (b) shows the probabilities for the evaluations of personal economic status. The perception of deterioration in the personal situation is clearly associated with increased electoral support for the candidate for Morena. The effects of the more negative evaluations on the probability of voting for López Obrador are significantly higher than those corresponding to the more positive evaluations.

¹² To test the robustness of these findings, we added several controls in additional estimations. We included a variable to consider the level of urbanization of the location of the individuals. In other models we added variables corresponding to the ethnic-racial identity of the respondents (indigenous, mestizo and white, the latter as a reference category). Finally, we tested the effect of the frequency of news consumption by different media (TV, radio, newspapers, Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp) separately and also using two additive indices: one for consumption in traditional media and another for consumption in social networks. Our main findings hold with these alternative specifications. These results are reported in Table A7.

FIGURE 1. Effect of the sociotropic and egotropic economic evaluations on the voting probability for the candidate representing Morena



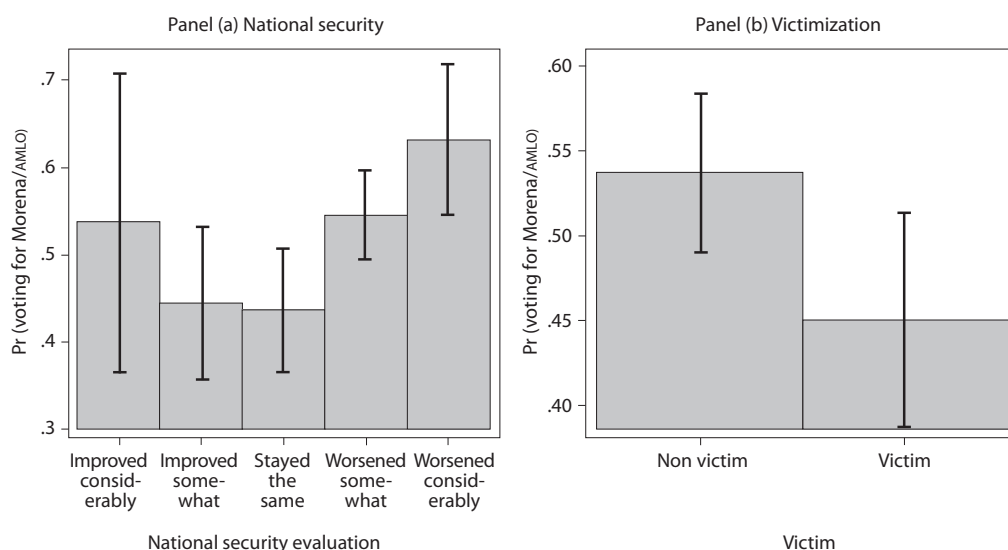
Source: Authors' elaboration based on CIDE-CSES 2018 National Electoral Study (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020).

Regarding the security dimension, the findings are mixed. The negative evaluation of the national security situation had a positive effect on electoral support for the candidate representing Morena—consistent with H.2b. The effect of direct experiences with crime is less evident. In the first two specifications the victimization variable was negatively associated with voting for AMLO-Morena ($p < 0.05$). However, this result is sensitive to alternative specifications, as Model 3 shows.

Figure 2 shows the estimated probabilities of voting for the candidate representing Morena according to the perception of the security issue and the victimization experience. Panel (a) presents the probabilities corresponding to the different assessments of the security situation at the national level. The figure indicates that there are no major differences in the electoral support of citizens who positively or negatively assessed the country's security situation at the extremes of the scale. However, the probabilities clearly differ between those who considered that it “*improved somewhat*” and “*worsened considerably*”. Panel (b) shows that while respondents who have been victims of crime are less likely to support the candidate for Morena than those who have not had direct experience with crime, this effect is less robust than the contextual assessment. The figure shows an overlap in the confidence intervals of the estimated probabilities (AMLO/Morena vote) for victims and non-victims.

The results on the issue of insecurity suggest, first, that sociotropic evaluations of security and personal experiences with crime can have differentiated effects on electoral preferences. This finding is consistent with previous works that analyzed

FIGURE 2. Effect of national security evaluations and personal experience with crime on the voting probability for the candidate representing Morena



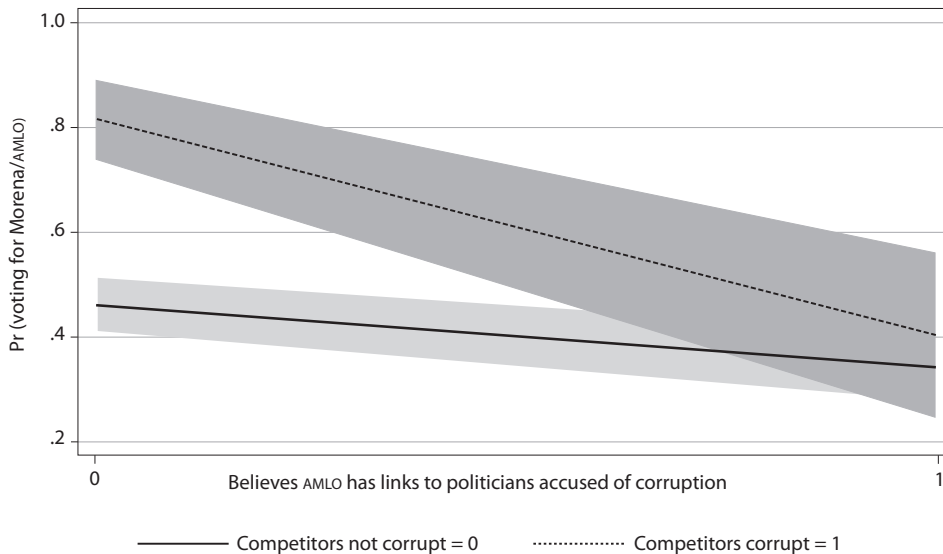
Source: Authors' elaboration based on CIDE-CSES 2018 National Electoral Study (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020).

their effects on the 2012 election (Romero *et al.*, 2016; Ley, 2017). However, in the specific case of López Obrador's campaign, it is possible that the campaign discussion about a possible amnesty had a counterproductive effect among voters who had already been personally affected by violence. This result resonates with the rejection of a potential amnesty previously expressed by victims' organizations during the presidential campaign (Barragán, 2018).

The evaluation on national corruption is not significant in the level of support for the candidate representing Morena—contrary to the expectation in H2c. Although dissatisfaction with the worsening of corruption was a component of the *rejection* of the ruling party, it does not appear to have been the central issue that mobilized a specific electorate in favor of López Obrador. Since it had a diffuse effect, the problem of corruption did not generate a clearly defined *issue public* (Krosnic, 1990). Despite being a central theme in the winning candidate's discourse, the dissatisfaction and indignation regarding this issue does not seem to have been decisive in the individual considerations of the voters who elected him.

However, Model 2 shows that the perception of the existence of possible links between López Obrador and people accused of corruption did affect the electoral support for the candidate representing Morena. This means that the credibility of specific accusations seems to have come at a cost to the leading candidate. In order to identify the prevalence of such an effect in the face of the multiple accusations of

FIGURE 3. Effects of the credibility of the accusations against PRI and PAN candidates, according to the credibility of the accusations against the candidate for Morena



Source: Authors’ elaboration based on CIDE-CSES 2018 National Electoral Study (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020).

corruption against the other candidates, Model 3 introduces the interactive term between the perception of AMLO’s corruption and the credibility of the corruption accusations against the PRI and PAN candidates.

Figure 3 shows the interactive effect of both variables, which is significant in the model. Those who consider the accusations against the candidate for Morena to be false (value of 0 on the horizontal axis) are much more likely to vote for him when the accusations against his opponents seem credible to them (dotted line).¹³ However, the probability of voting for AMLO decreases significantly when the accusations against him gain credibility (value 1), especially for those who consider that their opponents are *also* corrupt—that is, when there is a perception of widespread corruption. Finally, most of the political and socio-demographic variables are not significant in these models. As expected, those interviewed who self-identified as *morenistas* voted for their party.

In order to explore in detail the conformation of electoral preferences and to identify a possible conditional effect of the sociotropic and egotropic evaluations according to the direct experiences with each topic and/or the individual characteristics of the interviewees (H3a-H3c), we present a series of interactive models.

¹³ The probabilities shown in Figure 3 come from the estimates of Model 3, which includes the Morena party *identification* as a control variable.

These examine the joint effect of evaluations of the economy, security, and corruption according to the individuals' insertion in the informal market, their experience of victimization, and their level of information, respectively. The logic of these statistical tests is the identification of issue sectors or publics that have been mobilized to a greater extent due to characteristics that make them more sensitive to each topic, either because of direct effects on the specific topics of economy (economic vulnerability) or security (victimization) (Krosnick, 1990), or because of their greater knowledge and information regarding the country's situation (Gomez and Wilson, 2001) —for which we use the political information index described above. Table 3 shows the results of this set of models.

TABLE 3. Logit model: Campaign issues and voting for the candidate representing Morena. Interactive models

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
National economy evaluation	0.431*** (4.36)	0.357* (2.17)	0.448*** (4.62)	0.442*** (4.51)
Personal economy evaluation	0.591*** (4.67)	0.327*** (3.86)	0.320*** (3.80)	0.319*** (3.68)
National security evaluation	0.219** (3.25)	0.212** (3.09)	0.180* (2.32)	0.211** (3.14)
Victim	-0.364** (-2.64)	-0.344* (-2.56)	-0.828 (-1.17)	-0.339* (-2.42)
National corruption evaluation	0.0727 (0.83)	0.0715 (0.82)	0.0599 (0.70)	0.0512 (0.29)
Index of political information (IPI)				-0.0537 (-0.19)
Informal sector	1.833** (3.04)	-0.295 (-0.49)		
Informal * Personal economy evaluation	-0.431** (-2.95)			
Informal * National economy evaluation		0.130 (0.76)		
Victim * National security evaluation			0.131 (0.74)	
IPI National * corruption evaluation				0.00415 (0.06)
Morena identification	0.557* (2.57)	0.556** (2.58)	0.555** (2.62)	0.548** (2.59)
Female	-0.227 (-1.61)	-0.224 (-1.59)	-0.218 (-1.51)	-0.228 (-1.61)
Age	-0.00292 (-0.72)	-0.00269 (-0.67)	-0.00276 (-0.70)	-0.00267 (-0.66)

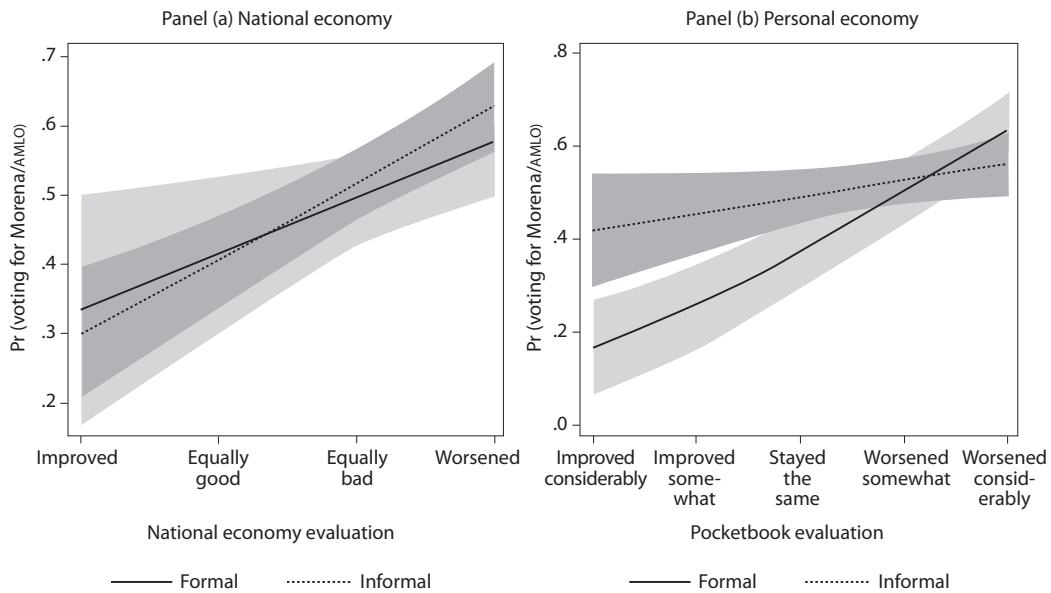
TABLE 3. Logit model: Campaign issues and voting for the candidate representing Morena. Interactive models (continuation)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Liberal-Conservative	-0.0748* (-2.31)	-0.0748* (-2.32)	-0.0743* (-2.30)	-0.0731* (-2.27)
Education	-0.0635 (-0.78)	-0.0591 (-0.71)	-0.0630 (-0.75)	-0.0572 (-0.66)
Constant	-3.977*** (-5.36)	-2.678*** (-3.56)	-2.706*** (-4.15)	-2.662* (-2.52)
Number of observations	966	966	966	966
Pseudo R ²	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.09

Source: Authors' elaboration based on CIDE-CSES 2018 National Electoral Study (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020). *Note:* Logit model. The variables of party identification and personal economic situation were included in wave 1. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, t -statistics in brackets.

Models 1 and 2 study the effect of evaluations of national and personal economic conditions in terms of their interaction with the economic vulnerability associated with informality. Figure 4 shows the estimated voting probabilities for López Obrador for both interactive terms. Economic vulnerability does not seem to condition the effect of the evaluations of the national economic situation (Panel a). However, consistent with our expectation under H3a, the interactive term between individual economic vulnerability and personal economic evaluation is significant.

Panel (b) in Figure 4 shows that, in the range of positive or neutral assessments of personal economic status, individuals in the formal sector are less likely to express their electoral support for the candidate representing Morena as compared to those in the informal sector. However, as the perception of personal economic well-being deteriorates, the intervals overlap between individuals in both sectors and support for López Obrador increases significantly for those in the formal sector as well. This finding provides additional evidence on the economic micro-foundations of support for the candidate representing Morena. For voters, the perception of a decline in their personal well-being was decisive in their support for the leading candidate. The results suggest that the perceived decline in the personal economic situation implied a convergence between the preferences of voters in the formal sector and those of the most economically vulnerable one (the informal sector). Previous studies have explored the differentiated weight of economic evaluations on the electoral preferences of voters in the formal/informal sector in Argentina (Singer, 2016). Consistently, the results for the federal election in Mexico in 2018 suggest that economic vulnerability conditioned the effect of pocketbook evalua-

FIGURE 4. Effects of economic vulnerability at different levels of economic evaluation

Source: Authors' elaboration based on CIDE-CSES 2018 National Electoral Study (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020).

tions of the economy. However, contrary to the Argentine case, Mexican voters in the informal sector who made positive assessments of their personal situation did not favor the ruling party.¹⁴ Support for the candidate representing Morena tended to be greater among the most vulnerable voters across the scale and increased slightly as the egotropic evaluation worsened. In contrast, the preferences of formal voters were particularly sensitive to the deterioration in their personal economic situation, which benefited candidate López Obrador.

Model 3 explores the combined effect of victimization and the assessment of the national security situation. The interactive term is not significant, indicating that direct experiences with crime did not necessarily condition the effect of evaluations of insecurity on the probability of voting for the candidate representing Morena—contrary to our hypothesis H.3b.

To find out whether the assessment of corruption had a differentiated effect on voters according to their level of information, Model 4 tests the effect of an interactive term between political information and the evaluation of the situation of cor-

¹⁴ An important difference with the Argentine election analyzed by Singer (2016) is the ideological orientation of the party in power. His results indicate that voters with positive economic evaluations in the informal sector favored Néstor Kirchner in 2005. While informality does not appear to have had a direct effect on electoral support for president Kirchner, his party may have had a relative advantage in capitalizing on economic improvement in the pockets of vulnerable voters.

ruption. The model includes the set of control variables incorporated in the previous models. Contrary to our expectations under H.3c, the results do not show a significant interactive effect of the information and the socio-political evaluation of this dimension. Hence, there is no evidence that the most informed voters were particularly sensitive to the issue of corruption when they cast their vote.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS


The 2018 presidential election in Mexico marked the arrival of a new party in office. This historic party alternation necessarily requires a clear and timely explanation of the elements that allowed the triumph of a candidate who ran for president for the third time. In this article we have focused on an explanation based on the public policy elements that were present in the previous administration and that could have impacted López Obrador's electoral success on this occasion.

Based on the extensive literature on issue voting, we explore three themes that permeated the political agenda prior to the presidential election: the economy, security, and corruption. We found that the economy was a particularly important factor in the definition of electoral preferences in favor of the candidate for Morena. Certainly, economic reforms were among the most controversial issues of Enrique Peña Nieto's administration, and our findings suggest that, given the high expectations for such changes along with the poor economic performance, AMLO benefited the most from these negative economic evaluations.

As previous work has documented, it is particularly difficult for the electorate to exercise consistent accountability on the dimension of security. The results presented here indicate that López Obrador was also favored by those who had negative evaluations of the national security, but victims—precisely the group less favored by the country's security situation—did not show an equally consistent support for the winning candidate. As we noted, one possibility is that López Obrador's amnesty proposals may have backfired on his campaign, at least among victims.

In this study we also found that general evaluations of the state of corruption at the national level did not have a direct effect on electoral preference for López Obrador. Consistent with studies on the electoral effect of corruption, our results confirm the difficulty of voters in using this dimension in the final definition of their electoral preferences, which can have negative effects on electoral accountability. In fact, our extended analysis showed that the possibility of punishing candidates for an allegation of corruption depends both on the perceived credibility of such observations, and on their comparison with the rest of the candidates—even after controlling for party identification. This finding resonates with the work of Botero *et al.* (2015), reiterating the importance of understanding the logic of such notions of credibility, particularly in a context where corruption scandals prevail across political fronts, regardless of the ideological spectrum.

Thus, in general terms, it is possible to say that the electoral victory of president Andrés Manuel López Obrador is largely the result of the dissatisfaction of an electorate in matters regarding economy and security, although it is likely that some of his proposals in the second area have alienated or divided the sector most affected by insecurity: the victims. And, although the candidate for Morena tried to capitalize on the issue of corruption and make it a banner of his campaign, the reality is that this was not an issue that permeated the final definition of electoral preferences. The reasons behind this may be many: the complexity of the issue, the wide prevalence of corruption throughout the political system, and the difficulty of evaluating the information and accusations regarding corruption, among others.

Beyond the ability to explain an important dimension of a historical electoral result in Mexico, this study contributes to existing analyses of thematic voting, incorporating three issues that have been widely discussed in the literature on electoral behavior, but that can rarely be studied together and in a comparative manner. Moreover, our work expands the traditional approach of studies on issue voting, identifying the different publics particularly mobilized around each topic. Our findings also point to the importance of deepening certain aspects of the non-economic vote on which political science still needs greater understanding, such as the political behavior of victims; the conditions under which victims demand accountability from government authorities on the specific issue of security; and the difficulty with which problems which are both generalized, as well as complicated in terms of political attribution —such as corruption— can become a determining factor in an election. 

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APPENDIX

TABLE A1. Descriptive statistics

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Morena/AMLO Vote	966	0.52	0.50	0	1
Vote for candidates	966	2.32	0.87	1	4
National economy evaluation	966	3.07	0.90	1	4
Personal economy evaluation	966	3.95	0.99	1	5
National security evaluation	966	3.49	1.14	1	5
National corruption evaluation	966	3.85	0.98	1	5
Victim	966	0.23	0.42	0	1
Liberal-Conservative	966	5.58	2.51	0	10
Female	966	0.56	0.50	0	1
Age	966	40.55	14.89	18	86
Education	966	2.26	0.93	0	4
Informal	966	0.63	0.48	0	1
Morena identification	966	0.25	0.43	0	1
PAN identification	966	0.16	0.37	0	1
PRD identification	966	0.04	0.20	0	1
PRI identification	966	0.14	0.34	0	1
Index of political information (IPI)	966	3.01	1.05	1	4
Corruption AMLO	865	0.41	0.49	0	1
Income	636	2.08	0.76	1	7
NSE Index	920	4.17	1.55	1	7
Corruption of opponents (Anaya and Meade)	857	0.37	0.48	0	1

Source: Authors' elaboration based on CIDE-CSES 2018 National Electoral Study (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020).

TABLE A2. Multinomial model: Campaign and voting issues with respect to the party in government in 2018 (+ income)

	PAN/Anaya Vote	Morena/AMLO Vote	Independent/ Bronco Vote
National economy evaluation	0.231 (1.45)	0.508*** (3.37)	0.426 (0.99)
Personal economy evaluation	0.164 (1.34)	0.362** (3.13)	-0.127 (-0.42)
National security evaluation	0.0791 (0.60)	0.282* (2.28)	0.152 (0.44)
Victim	0.303 (0.96)	-0.240 (-0.79)	1.493* (2.29)
National corruption evaluation	0.365** (2.74)	0.355** (2.91)	0.321 (0.90)
PAN identification	0.764* (2.04)	-0.0733 (-0.20)	-2.035 (-1.80)
PRD identification	0.981 (1.55)	-0.0252 (-0.04)	-14.08 (-0.02)
Morena identification	-0.278 (-0.79)	0.104 (0.34)	-1.911* (-2.26)
PRI identification	-0.934* (-2.57)	-1.460*** (-4.30)	-15.66 (-0.02)
Liberal-Conservative	-0.00746 (-0.14)	-0.0777 (-1.58)	-0.198 (-1.73)
Female	-0.292 (-1.12)	-0.624** (-2.58)	-0.0158 (-0.03)
Age	-0.0152 (-1.58)	-0.0173* (-1.97)	-0.0582* (-2.25)
Education	0.265 (1.65)	0.0244 (0.16)	-0.106 (-0.29)
Income	0.172 (0.91)	0.119 (0.67)	0.419 (1.14)
Constant	-2.688* (-2.36)	-2.679* (-2.53)	-1.269 (-0.46)
Number of observations		636	
Pseudo R ²		0.14	

Source: Authors' elaboration based on CIDE-CSES 2018 National Electoral Study (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020). *Note:* Multinomial model with PRI/Meade vote as reference category. The variables of party identification and personal economic situation were included in wave 1. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, t -statistics in brackets.

TABLE A3. Multinomial model: Campaign and voting issues with respect to the party in government in 2018 (+ NSE index)

	PAN/Anaya Vote	Morena/AMLO Vote	Independent/ Bronco Vote
National economy evaluation	0.372** (2.83)	0.629*** (5.19)	0.274 (0.90)
Personal economy evaluation	-0.0205 (-0.19)	0.224* (2.26)	-0.33 (-1.40)
National security evaluation	0.105 (0.96)	0.284** (2.84)	0.286 (1.12)
Victim	0.357 (1.39)	-0.0626 (-0.25)	1.449** (2.87)
National corruption evaluation	0.277* (-2.53)	0.234* (-2.37)	-0.0852 (-0.34)
PAN identification	0.679* (2.24)	-0.208 (-0.70)	-0.762 (-1.09)
PRD identification	0.646 (1.21)	0.0572 (0.11)	-14.52 (-0.01)
Morena identification	-0.213 (-0.74)	0.117 (-0.47)	-0.913 (-1.49)
PRI identification	-0.945** (-3.08)	-1.288*** (-4.62)	-15.72 (-0.02)
Liberal-Conservative	0.0431 (0.98)	-0.0572 (-1.44)	-0.119 (-1.31)
Female	-0.37 (-1.72)	-0.474* (-2.41)	-0.347 (-0.72)
Age	-0.0149 (-1.92)	-0.0136 (-1.95)	-0.0469* (-2.45)
Education	0.265 (-1.96)	0.0868 (-0.7)	-0.0193 (-0.06)
NSE Index	-0.137 (-1.76)	-0.125 (-1.78)	-0.198 (-1.14)
Constant	-1.617 (-1.77)	-1.937* (-2.30)	1.53 (-0.74)
Number of observations		920	
Pseudo R ²		0.12	

Source: Authors' elaboration based on CIDE-CSES 2018 National Electoral Study (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020). *Note:* Multinomial model with PRI/Meade vote as reference category. The variables of party identification and personal economic situation were included in wave 1. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, t -statistics in brackets.

TABLE A4. Logit model: Campaign issues and voting for the candidate representing Morena (+ income)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
National economy evaluation	0.384** (2.98)	0.411** (2.97)	0.332* (2.10)
Personal economy evaluation	0.322** (3.16)	0.368** (3.08)	0.341** (2.86)
National security evaluation	0.230** (2.61)	0.280* (2.43)	0.326* (2.20)
Victim	-0.544** (-3.07)	-0.576** (-3.09)	-0.501* (-2.42)
National corruption evaluation	0.127 (1.15)	0.149 (1.28)	-0.0000805 (-0.00)
Corruption AMLO		-1.265*** (-5.21)	-0.595** (-2.62)
Corruption opposition (Anaya and Meade)			1.649*** (5.58)
Corruption AMLO * Corruption opposition			-1.089* (-2.32)
Morena identification	0.691* (2.56)	0.592* (1.99)	0.503 (1.60)
Liberal-Conservative	-0.0524 (-1.47)	-0.0469 (-1.37)	-0.0251 (-0.61)
Female	-0.432* (-2.50)	-0.555** (-2.63)	-0.537* (-2.32)
Age	-0.00460 (-0.84)	-0.00686 (-0.99)	-0.00519 (-0.74)
Education	-0.0773 (-0.67)	-0.0605 (-0.42)	0.0143 (0.09)
Income	-0.0438 (-0.43)	-0.0516 (-0.41)	-0.0670 (-0.45)
Constant	-2.735*** (-3.57)	-2.587** (-2.79)	-2.896** (-3.04)
Number of observations	636	559	521
Pseudo R ²	0.10	0.18	0.22

Source: Authors' elaboration based on CIDE-CSES 2018 National Electoral Study (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020). *Note:* Logit model. The variables of party identification and personal economic situation were included in wave 1. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, t -statistics in parentheses.

TABLE A5. Logit model: Campaign issues and voting for the candidate representing Morena (+ NSE index)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
National economy evaluation	0.439*** (4.42)	0.457*** (3.99)	0.350** (2.83)
Personal economy evaluation	0.304*** (3.34)	0.348*** (3.44)	0.308** (2.80)
National security evaluation	0.228** (3.18)	0.260** (2.98)	0.306** (2.70)
Victim	-0.370* (-2.48)	-0.321* (-2.21)	-0.247 (-1.49)
National corruption evaluation	0.0731 (0.85)	0.115 (1.27)	-0.0236 (-0.22)
Corruption AMLO		-1.269*** (-5.75)	-0.499* (-2.42)
Corruption opposition (Anaya and Meade)			1.845*** (6.32)
Corruption AMLO * Corruption opposition			-1.494** (-3.20)
Morena identification	0.553* (2.46)	0.479* (2.03)	0.386 (1.47)
Liberal-Conservative	-0.0669* (-2.01)	-0.0703* (-2.11)	-0.0400 (-1.12)
Female	-0.239 (-1.64)	-0.330 (-1.85)	-0.268 (-1.43)
Age	-0.00275 (-0.69)	-0.00487 (-1.00)	-0.00449 (-0.89)
Education	-0.0342 (-0.37)	-0.0617 (-0.59)	0.0405 (0.38)
NSE Index	-0.0479 (-0.72)	-0.0344 (-0.50)	-0.0708 (-0.83)
Constant	-2.718*** (-3.86)	-2.560** (-3.23)	-2.778** (-3.22)
Number of observations	920	824	766
Pseudo R ²	0.09	0.17	0.22

Source: Authors' elaboration based on CIDE-CSES 2018 National Electoral Study (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020). *Note:* Logit model. The variables of party identification and personal economic situation were included in wave 1. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, t -statistics in parentheses.

TABLE A6. Logit model: Campaign issues and voting for the candidate representing Morena (+ presidential approval)

	Model 1	Model 2
National economy evaluation	0.396*** (4.08)	0.431*** (3.94)
Personal economy evaluation	0.301*** (3.68)	0.344*** (3.81)
National security evaluation	0.193** (2.89)	0.220** (2.73)
Victim	-0.331* (-2.36)	-0.314* (-2.22)
National corruption evaluation	0.0355 (0.4)	0.0796 (0.82)
Corruption AMLO		-1.243*** (-5.75)
Morena identification	0.585** (2.8)	0.536* (2.39)
Liberal-Conservative	-0.0729* (-2.24)	-0.0860** (-2.63)
Female	-0.202 (-1.42)	-0.293 (-1.67)
Age	-0.00309 (-0.84)	-0.00475 (-1.04)
Education	-0.059 (-0.72)	-0.0728 (-0.78)
Disagreement with EPN's presidential performance	0.383*** -3.56	0.374** -3.06
Constant	-3.800*** (-5.73)	-3.589*** (-4.51)
Number of observations	947	850
Pseudo R ²	0.107	0.178

Source: Authors' elaboration based on CIDE-CSES 2018 National Electoral Study (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020). *Note:* Logit model. The variables of party identification and personal economic situation were included in wave 1. The presidential agreement variable was included in wave 2. Higher values for the variable of *disagreement with EPN's presidential performance* indicate more negative evaluations. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, t -statistics in parentheses.

TABLE A7. Logit model: Campaign issues and voting for the candidate representing Morena (+ additional controls)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
National economy evaluation	0.442*** (4.48)	0.392*** (3.72)	0.427*** (4.36)	0.437*** (4.52)	0.424*** (4.37)
Personal economy evaluation	0.335*** (3.90)	0.354*** (4.12)	0.336*** (3.97)	0.332*** (3.91)	0.342*** (4.00)
National security evaluation	0.213** (3.22)	0.233*** (3.40)	0.229*** (3.49)	0.223*** (3.40)	0.216*** (3.29)
Victim	-0.343* (-2.47)	-0.290* (-1.97)	-0.363* (-2.38)	-0.387** (-2.77)	-0.311* (-2.17)
National corruption evaluation	0.0766 (0.91)	0.111 (1.23)	0.125 (1.44)	0.0967 (1.14)	0.0957 (1.16)
Morena identification	0.533* (2.49)	0.481* (2.26)	0.578** (2.67)	0.575** (2.71)	0.538* (2.52)
Liberal-Conservative	-0.0754* (-2.30)	-0.0931* (-2.57)	-0.0832** (-2.65)	-0.0774* (-2.44)	-0.0769* (-2.37)
Female	-0.232 (-1.63)	-0.229 (-1.57)	-0.182 (-1.19)	-0.212 (-1.45)	-0.237 (-1.69)
Age	-0.00346 (-0.88)	-0.00276 (-0.73)	-0.00376 (-0.88)	-0.00290 (-0.73)	-0.00370 (-0.92)
Education	-0.0884 (-1.06)	-0.0896 (-1.07)	-0.0796 (-0.99)	-0.0743 (-0.90)	-0.0899 (-1.09)
Urban	0.248 (1.32)	0.212 (1.15)	0.310 (1.67)	0.262 (1.37)	0.275 (1.48)
Indigenous		0.0677 (0.24)			
Mestizo		-0.343 (-1.60)			
Frequency of radio news consumption			-0.0819 (-1.92)		
Frequency of TV news consumption			0.0396 (0.86)		
Frequency of print news consumption			0.0616 (1.44)		
Frequency of news consumption on Facebook			-0.0450 (-1.07)		
Frequency of news consumption on Twitter			0.0815 (1.38)		
Frequency of WhatsApp News Usage			-0.00287 (-0.06)		

TABLE A7. Logit model: Campaign issues and voting for the candidate representing Morena (+ additional controls) (continuation)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Index of news consumption in traditional media				0.00141 (0.07)	
Index of news consumption on social networks					-0.00434 (-0.25)
Constant	-2.982*** (-4.60)	-2.851*** (-4.06)	-3.293*** (-4.77)	-3.154*** (-4.72)	-3.018*** (-4.47)
Number of observations	966	923	945	955	952
Pseudo R ²	0.097	0.100	0.106	0.100	0.097

Source: Authors' elaboration based on CIDE-CSES 2018 National Electoral Study (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020). *Note:* The variables of party identification and personal economic situation were included in wave 1. The variables of media consumption were included in wave 2. *Notes:* Logit model. The index of news consumption in traditional media includes the frequency of news consumption on radio, TV and newspaper. The Social Media News Usage Index includes the frequency of news usage on Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, t -statistics in brackets.

Electoral Handouts During Mexico's 2018 Elections

Kenneth F. Greene and Alberto Simpser*

ABSTRACT: Election-season handouts of goods and services by political parties are endemic in Mexico's new democracy, and the practice appears to be increasing since 2000. Using information from a 2018 election-season panel data set of ordinary citizens, we provide the most detailed examination yet available of vote-buying attempts in Mexico. Such efforts were practiced by nearly all parties, involved millions of citizens, included a variety of material offers, and attempted to induce voters to alter their electoral behavior in myriad ways. Nevertheless, descriptive evidence implies that compliance with political machines' wishes may have been low because many recipients had a muddled understanding of what they were asked to do and did not fear retribution from the vote buying party. In addition, circumstantial evidence suggests that vote-buying efforts were insufficient to overturn the winning candidate's advantage in the presidential election.

KEYWORDS: elections, vote buying, electoral integrity, trust.

Dávivas durante las elecciones mexicanas de 2018

RESUMEN: La entrega de bienes y servicios por partidos políticos en campaña electoral es endémica en la nueva democracia mexicana y esta práctica parece estar aumentando desde 2000. A partir de información recopilada en una base de datos tipo panel de ciudadanos durante la campaña electoral de 2018, ofrecemos el estudio más detallado hasta ahora disponible sobre los intentos de compra de voto en México. Tales esfuerzos fueron practicados por casi todos los partidos, involucraron a millones de ciudadanos, incluyeron una variedad de ofertas materiales e intentaron inducir a los votantes a alterar su comportamiento electoral de innumerables maneras. No obstante, la evidencia descriptiva sugiere que el cumplimiento de las metas de las maquinarias partidistas puede haber sido bajo porque muchos beneficiarios tenían una comprensión limitada de lo que se les pedía que hicieran

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y no temían las represalias del partido comprador de votos. Además, la evidencia circunstancial sugiere que los esfuerzos de compra de votos fueron insuficientes para anular la ventaja del candidato ganador en las elecciones presidenciales.

PALABRAS CLAVE: elecciones, compra de voto, integridad electoral, confianza.

INTRODUCTION

Mexico's transition from single-party dominance to democracy focused on leveling the playing field so that opposition candidates could compete on equal footing with incumbents. The 2018 elections provide strong evidence that these efforts were successful. Andrés Manuel López Obrador, leading the upstart Morena party, swept into office with the most decisive win since the 1982 presidential election. Thanks to world-leading electoral management institutions, gone are the days when outcome-changing electoral fraud could deny opposition candidates victories they earned at the polls. But despite these advances, problems in the conduct of elections lurk below the surface. Not only have systematic schemes to purchase citizens' electoral support survived the transition to fully competitive democracy, the use of electoral clientelism may have increased over time.¹ This article provides a detailed description of the practice of electoral clientelism in the 2018 general elections based on original survey data.

Overall, we find that Mexico's 2018 general elections were awash in electoral handouts. Over 42 per cent of the eligible voters in our panel survey data report that they were offered some good or service by a political party during the campaign season, excluding small gifts that could be interpreted as campaign advertising. (Including all offers reaches 52.9%).² A whopping 83.7 per cent of these citizens were asked, in exchange, to vote for a particular candidate, to turn out, or to stay home on election day.³ All political parties distributed handouts, though the PRI-led coalition did so the most, followed by the PAN-led coalition. Morena's coalition partook in the attempt to buy votes too, albeit as a minor player.

Our survey data, collected before and after the 2018 general elections, show that, despite manifold attempts to buy votes, such attempts were likely unsuccessful. Building on recent specialized literature that questions the efficacy of vote buying (Stokes *et al.*, 2013; Schneider, 2019; Greene, 2018), we show that many recipients

¹ Vote buying is viewed as normatively unacceptable by Mexican citizens (Schedler 2004) and has been argued to undermine popular confidence in the electoral prospects of opposition parties (Fox 1994; McCann and Domínguez 1998).

² Of the 583 panel respondents, 10 did not respond to questions asking whether they were offered electoral handouts. Of the remaining 573, 303 (52.9%) were offered a handout in either wave of the survey. Excluding the 29 respondents that were only offered a small gift and the 54 that did not specify what they were offered, yields 220 of 519 (42.4%). Henceforth, we refer to these 220 respondents as "targeted citizens".

³ 180 of the 220 targeted citizens were asked for their vote choice, participation, or abstention, but 5 respondents did not specify what was requested of them, leaving 215 in the denominator.

had a muddled understanding of what they were asked to do in exchange, that most recipients ascribed limited value to the handouts they received, and that out of those recipients who understood what was asked of them, few feared sanctions for non-compliance. Several elements that analysts have argued are essential for vote buying to alter recipients' behavior (Stokes, 2005; Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007; Dixit and Londregan, 1996) were thus missing or in short supply.

The first section of this article discusses measurement challenges and presents estimates of the extent of vote-buying attempts in Mexico since 2000. The second section reports a detailed inventory of the handouts that citizens were offered during the 2018 election season. Our empirical findings are largely based on the Mexico Elections and Quality of Democracy Survey (EQD), an original survey administered to a nationally representative group of eligible voters in May and June of 2018, and then again after the July 1st elections. The conclusion draws out the implications of our findings for the quality of elections in Mexico's new democracy.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT VOTE BUYING? DETECTING ELECTORAL HANDOUTS

Virtually all observers of Mexico's politics know that electoral handouts are a routine part of the campaigns, even after the transition to fully competitive democracy (Aparicio, 2017; Becerra, 2012; Beltrán and Castro Cornejo, 2015, 2019; Buendía and Somuano, 2003; Casar and Ugalde, 2018; Cornelius, 2003; De la O, 2015; Díaz-Cayeros *et al.*, 2016; Greene, 2018; Hilgers, 2008; Larreguy *et al.*, 2016; Nichter and Palmer-Rubin, 2015; Schedler, 2004; Serra, 2016; Simpser, 2012, 2013; Szwarcberg, 2015). Nevertheless, many basic questions about the vote buying enterprise remain unanswered for lack of systematic information. For instance:

- What proportion of the electorate is subject to one or more vote-buying attempts?
- What items do people receive (cash, goods, services)?
- What is the going rate for cash handouts?
- Which political parties attempt to buy votes and to what extent?
- Do parties compete for the same voters with material offers, or do they divide up the electorate into bastions?
- What do recipients believe they are asked to do in exchange for benefits?
- Do citizens fear retaliation if they fail to comply with their end of the bargain?

It is admittedly challenging to elicit this kind of information from citizens. After all, the explicit exchange of material rewards for electoral support is illegal in Mexico and many implicit exchanges are viewed as illicit, and socially stigmatized, by the participants (Schedler, 2004). Consequently, recipients of electoral handouts may be reluctant to divulge their participation in the practice (Beltrán and Castro Cornejo, 2020).

Just as importantly, surveys seldom collect information with enough detail to answer many of the questions listed above.

Ethnography by talented fieldworkers who genuinely gain the trust of their subjects may be the best technique for eliciting truthful answers to sensitive questions, but this approach cannot easily provide information that is representative of an electorate (Auyero, 2000; Hilgers, 2009; Lomnitz, 1982; Rizzo, 2015; Schedler, 2004; Stokes *et al.*, 2013; Szwarcberg, 2015; Zarazaga, 2014). Field experiments that attempt to suppress vote-buying or citizens' compliance with political machines' wishes are able to shed light on the overall electoral effects at the constituency level, but research utilizing this approach has so far focused on estimating reduced-form causal effects of specific interventions on vote totals, not on describing the extent and characteristics of vote-buying efforts (Banerjee *et al.*, 2011; Blattman *et al.*, 2017; Cruz *et al.*, 2016; Green and Vasudevan, 2016; Fujiwara and Wantchekon, 2013; Hicken *et al.*, 2017; Kramon, 2016; Vicente, 2014).

In recent years, researchers have employed sample surveys as a means of collecting nuanced data on individuals that can be representative at the national level. However, analysts have not reached consensus about the best questioning technique for detecting electoral handouts. Questionnaires have employed two types of direct questions. In one approach, respondents are asked some version of: "Have you received a good, service, or favor from a candidate or political party?" Questions such as this that do not mention an explicit *quid pro quo* have appeared in the Mexico 2000 and 2006 Panel Studies (Lawson *et al.*, 2000, 2006; Cornelius, 2003) and the Comparative National Elections Project (CNEP) survey for Mexico in 2012 (Moreno, 2012). This approach may cast too wide a net, including affirmative responses when citizens receive a policy-based benefit or when they receive campaign advertisements of little material value such as a pen or hat.

In another use of direct questions, respondents are asked some version of: "Have you received a good, service, or favor *in exchange for your vote*?" Items that include this kind of explicit *quid pro quo* have appeared in the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems survey for Mexico in 2000 (used in Buendía and Somuano, 2003), the Americas Barometer (LAPOP) survey in 2010 (used in Faughan and Zechmeister, 2011), the Mexico 2012 Panel Study (Greene *et al.*, 2012), and the CNEP for Mexico in 2018 (Moreno, 2018).⁴ Yet this approach often yields estimates of the rate of vote buying that observers believe are too low. Moreover, research suggests that respondents that are more knowledgeable about the law are less likely to answer direct questions truthfully (Kiewiet and Nickerson, 2014), potentially leading to inferential bias when using vote buying either as an outcome or an explanatory variable.

⁴ CSES: <https://cses.org/>. LAPOP: <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/>. CNEP: <https://u.osu.edu/cnep/files/2020/06/Merge48-3.zip>.

Indirect questioning techniques seek to overcome the social desirability bias that is likely embedded in responses to direct questions (especially those that mention an explicit exchange) by allowing respondents to communicate information about their behaviors without openly admitting to them. One such approach is the list experiment where randomly selected members of the control group receive a list of J non-sensitive behaviors and members of the treatment group receive a list of $J+1$ where the extra item is some version of “I received a good, service, or favor in exchange for my vote”. Under specific assumptions, the difference in the mean number of items checked off in one *versus* the other list reveals the aggregate rate of respondent involvement in vote buying exchanges (Blair and Imai, 2012). This approach typically leads to higher estimates of vote buying than direct questions (Çarkoğlu and Aytaç, 2015, Corstange, 2009; González-Ocantos *et al.*, 2012; Nichter and Palmer-Rubin, 2015). Recent advances permit researchers to diagnose the degree of remaining social desirability bias (Simpser, 2017) and to use list-experiment data as a dependent variable (Blair and Imai, 2012) or an independent variable in outcome regression models (Imai *et al.*, 2015).

Nevertheless, any gain in respondent privacy comes at the cost of the information available to the researcher. During the interview, enumerators cannot know whether any one particular respondent did or did not engage in vote buying. Consequently, researchers cannot ask detailed follow-up questions that would illuminate which parties give handouts, what items citizens receive from them, and what citizens are asked to do in return. Moreover, for reasons of time and cost researchers rarely ask about handouts from multiple parties, obscuring the degree of competitive clientelism. In addition, indirect questioning techniques are cognitively more demanding than direct questions and therefore cause their own measurement problems. Enumerators or respondents can become confused, for example, leading to poor administration and, at times, nonsensical results (*i.e.*, negative estimates of the prevalence of vote buying). High cognitive demands may also cause greater measurement problems among poor and less-educated respondents—precisely those that some literature predicts should be the prime targets of vote-buying efforts (Beltrán and Castro Cornejo, 2020, Holbrook and Krosnick, 2010a, 2010b).

We point to three additional limitations of existing approaches to measuring vote buying that cut across questioning techniques. As noted above, all of the indirect questions and many of the direct questions used in Mexico (and elsewhere) have included the explicit *quid pro quo* “in exchange for your vote”. This may spark response bias to a greater degree than questions that do not specify the *quid pro quo*.⁵ Second, whether or not a *quid pro quo* is mentioned, this kind of question is too blunt in light of basic distinctions that have become standard in the literature—for

⁵ Beltrán and Castro Cornejo (2020) find that specifying the *quid pro quo* increases nonresponse rates.

example, between vote-choice buying, turnout buying, and abstention buying (Gans-Morse *et al.*, 2014). Third, questions used in Mexico have asked respondents whether they “received” something, thus filtering out those respondents who were offered a payoff but refused it as well as those who were promised a benefit after election day. These latter categories could account for a significant portion of the parties’ handout activity during campaign periods. Moreover, receiving, refusing, or being promised a handout could conceivably have different effects on a host of outcomes of interest, including turnout behavior and vote choice.

As an improvement on existing approaches, we deployed a modified direct questioning technique in our Mexico EQD Survey that is easy to understand for enumerators and respondents, maintains the descriptive detail of standard direct questioning, and aims to diminish certain forms of social desirability bias. Our approach yields a full inventory of the material benefits and services that citizens received, were offered but rejected, or were promised from all the parties during the campaign season. We fielded these questions to a nationally-representative sample of ordinary Mexican citizens eligible to vote in May and June of 2018 (N=1 310), and then re-interviewed the same sample of citizens after the July 1st elections (N=583).⁶

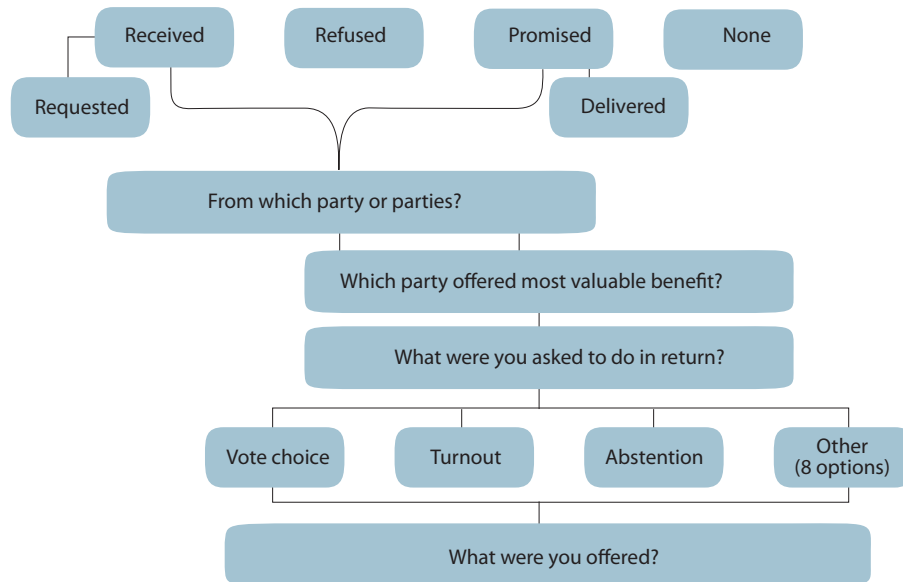
Enumerators began by reading the following preamble:

Now I would like to ask you about your own experiences in 2018. Sometimes, the political parties give groceries, cash, gift cards, construction materials, water cisterns, medicine, or they may help get access to government programs like Prospera or Seguro Popular, give educational subsidies, or medical attention. They also may offer jobs or legal services. In the following questions, I would like to know about your experience with these sorts of things in 2018. To guarantee your privacy, I am going to give you my phablet so you can answer the questions in private. Like before, push the green button after each response. When you are finished, hand me the phablet. I want to remind you that all your answers are confidential.

Our procedure was designed to diminish social desirability bias that may arise due to the personal interaction between enumerator and respondent. The preamble communicated that survey researchers share with the respondent knowledge about the existence of electoral handouts. In addition, respondents were handed the phablet so that they could answer the questions by themselves out of the view of the enumerator. As they advanced from the practice screen, respondents could observe that each prior response would disappear from the screen, effectively hiding their answer from the enumerator and therefore offering a sense of privacy.

We represent the flow logic of our set of questions about electoral handouts in Figure 1 and refer to other follow-up questions in the text. The full wording ap-

⁶ Multiple attempts were made to re-interview all 1 310 respondents of the pre-electoral survey.

FIGURE 1. Electoral handout questions in the Mexico 2018 EQD survey

Source: Greene and Simper (2018).

pears in the Appendix. We believe that these simple and straightforward questions improve survey administration, diminish response bias and increase measurement validity.

Before describing our results we briefly review prior findings on vote buying in Mexico. There are no clear rules for comparing unlike surveys that use different questioning techniques, draw samples at different times with respect to election day, and interview respondents once *versus* more than once. Nevertheless, to provide a sense of the prior findings on vote buying in Mexico, Table 1 shows estimates for the last four general elections from the sample survey datasets we can access. Direct questions with an explicit *quid pro quo* (in italics in Table 1) registered levels of vote-buying attempts as low as 5.9 per cent in 2012 and as high as 17.9 per cent in 2018. Direct questions without an explicit *quid pro quo* generally showed higher levels, ranging from 16.7 per cent in 2010 off the election cycle to 26 per cent in 2000 to 51 per cent in 2015.⁷ The most straightforward comparisons

⁷ This type of question —*i.e.*, direct and without an explicit *quid pro quo*— was used in 2006 and returned a much lower estimate at 5.9 per cent; however, it asked only about benefits that came from “party representatives” and thus may have led respondents to consider only those goods and services that were provided by formal political party personnel. The 2015 CSES figure is an average of the incidence of vote buying in municipal, state, and national legislative elections, in contrast with the rest of the reported figures, which refer to national elections.

TABLE 1. Estimates of electoral handouts

	Direct	Indirect	Modified direct
No <i>quid pro quo</i>	5.3-51% (N=4)		52.9% (N=1)
<i>Quid pro quo</i>	5.9-17.9% (N=4)	21.2% (N=1)	

Source: Greene and Simpser (2018). *Notes:* N denotes the number of surveys in the cell.

between items with and without a *quid pro quo* come from the 2000 and 2012 election cycles. Both items were asked, albeit in different surveys and at different points in their respective electoral cycles. In these contests, the questions without a *quid pro quo* registered a much higher rate than those with a *quid pro quo*. Interestingly, the surveys in 2012 also employed a list experiment. Even though this indirect question contained an explicit *quid pro quo* that typically diminishes vote-buying estimates, it yielded a higher estimate than any of the other approaches fielded in that election year at 21.2 per cent. Presumably, a question without a *quid pro quo* that also maintained confidentiality would have yielded even higher estimates.

We used such an approach in the Mexico 2018 EQD. Our “modified direct question” yielded the highest levels of vote buying recorded in a national election in Mexico using any technique. Our question does not include a *quid pro quo* clause and it strives to maintain the respondents’ sense of privacy at the moment of response. At the same time, it avoids the challenges of indirect questioning techniques. Using this approach, we find that 52.9 per cent of panel respondents were offered a benefit, whether they accepted it or not. For much of the analysis below, we exclude respondents who were only offered a small gift or did not specify the type of handout they were offered, referring to the remaining group as “targeted citizens,” as mentioned previously. Limiting our estimate to targeted citizens here brings our estimate for panel respondents down to 42.4 per cent (see footnote 2 for details).

Direct, no *quid pro quo*

- Mexico 2000 Panel: “In the last few weeks, have you received a gift or assistance from any of the political parties?” (analysis by Cornelius 2003: 18).
- Mexico 2006 Panel: “In the last few weeks, has a representative of a political party or candidate given you a gift, money, food, groceries, or some other type of assistance or help?” (analysis by the authors).
- CNEP 2012: “Did you receive a gift from any of the candidates or parties during the elections” (analysis by the authors).
- CSES 2015: “During the electoral campaign for federal deputies, did you receive

a gift or assistance from any of the candidates to federal deputy of [name of political party]?” (question was asked separately of each political party; analysis by Beltrán and Castro Cornejo, 2020).

Direct, *quid pro quo*

- CSES 2000: “It’s well known that some candidates send letters, give gifts, and organize canvassers to get votes house to house. Have any of these campaigners for the presidential candidates...given you a gift?” (analysis by Buendía and Somuano, 2003: 301).
- America’s Barometer 2010, *Client*: “In recent years and thinking about election campaigns, has a candidate or someone from a political party offered you anything such as a favor, food, or other benefit or thing in return for your support for that candidate or party? Did that happen frequently, rarely, or never?” (analysis by Faughnan and Zechmeister, 2011).
- Mexico 2012 Panel: Direct question “In the last few weeks, has someone done a favor for you or offered a gift or service in exchange for your vote?” [“En las últimas semanas, ¿Alguien le hizo un favor o le ofreció un regalo o servicio a cambio de su voto?”] (analysis by the authors).
- CNEP 2018: “During the campaigns for the last elections, were you or anyone you know offered a gift or compensation to vote for a specific candidate or party?” (analysis by the authors).

Indirect, *quid pro quo*

- Mexico 2012 Panel: List experiment sensitive item: “Received a gift, favor, or service in exchange for your vote” (analysis by Nichter and Palmer Rubin, 2015; Greene, 2018).

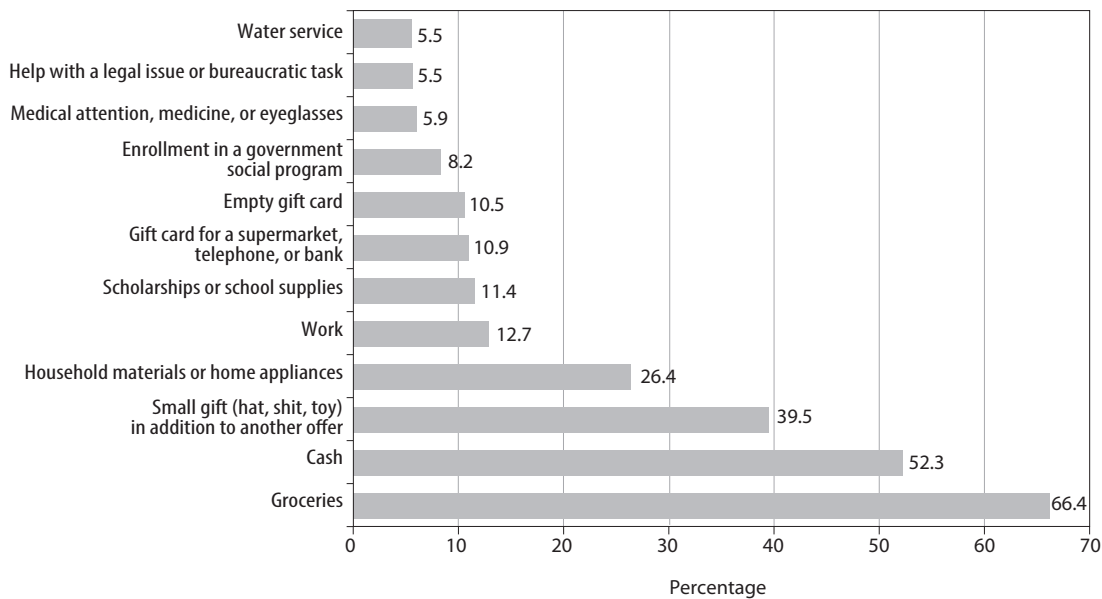
Modified direct, *no quid pro quo*

- EQD 2018: See above in body of the paper for the question text (analysis by the authors).

We next describe the variety of benefits offered to citizens and what they were asked to do in exchange for these, giving the fullest picture to date of the competing parties’ use of material incentives during elections.

HANDOUTS IN THE 2018 ELECTION: EVIDENCE FROM THE MEXICO 2018 EQD PANEL SURVEY

Mexico’s recent electoral history is dotted with stories about spectacular handouts and systematic schemes to buy electoral support. In 2000, the governor of Yucatán, Víctor Cervera Pacheco, was accused of distributing washing machines in exchange for votes (*Proceso*, 2003). Following the 2012 elections, Andrés Manuel López Obrador brought suit in the Federal Electoral Tribunal (TEPJF), alleging that the

FIGURE 2. Inventory of benefits received, refused, and promised in 2018

Source: Greene and Simpser (2018). *Notes:* N = 220 “targeted citizens”. Of the 583 panel respondents, 10 did not respond to the questions about electoral handouts, 270 (47.1%) did not receive any offer, 29 (5.1%) were only offered a small gift (and are excluded from this figure), and 54 did not specify what they were offered, yielding 220 targeted citizens. Bars do not sum to 100 per cent because respondents could report multiple offers. Because we excluded those respondents who only reported receiving a small gift, the “Small gift” bar in the figure represents the percentage of targeted citizens who received a small gift in addition to another larger benefit. Mexico 2018 EQD Panel Survey.

victorious Peña Nieto campaign had bought votes with everything from goats to tens of thousands of cash cards redeemable at Soriana grocery stores (TEPJF SUP-JIN-0359-2012; Cantú, 2019). In the 2018 elections, reports to Acción Ciudadana Contra la Pobreza included claims of receiving up to 5 000 pesos as an electoral handout (ACP, 2018).

These dramatic anecdotes notwithstanding, most electoral handouts are more mundane. Figure 2 reports the types of handouts that targeted citizens reported being offered in either wave of the Mexico EQD survey.

Groceries appear to be the main currency of the campaigns. Over 66 per cent of targeted citizens were offered groceries. Over 52 per cent of targeted citizens were offered cash. On the basis of other sources, it appears that the modal cash offer in 2018 was 500 pesos (about USD 26) (ACP, 2018). Cash cards are reportedly of similar value but, compared to 2012, they may have played a smaller role in 2018 (when our data indicate that “only” 10.9 per cent of targeted citizens were offered an active cash card and 10.5 per cent an empty one with the promise it would be activated after the election).

Other benefits likely require more selectivity and planning by the parties and involve active participation by clients in the weeks and months before election day. These include home construction materials like cement, brick, plastics, water cisterns, paint, and electro-domestic items (offered to 26.4% of targeted citizens); school supplies or minor scholarships (11.4%); work that often involves short-term employment in canvassing and get-out-the-vote efforts (12.7%); and medical attention, such as medicines and eyeglasses (5.9%).

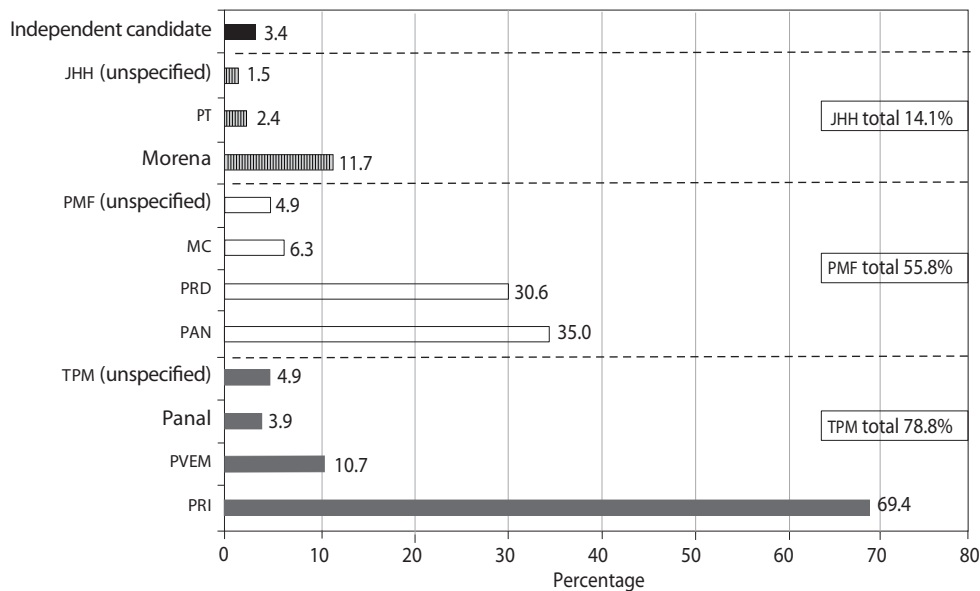
Which political parties distributed handouts?

Research on vote buying often argues that one political machine—generally the incumbent’s—dominates the provision of electoral handouts (Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007; Stokes, 2005; Dixit and Londregan, 1996; Cox and McCubbins, 1986; Gans-Morse *et al.*, 2014). Other literature, however, has considered the possibility that multiple parties attempt to buy votes (Simpser, 2013) and documented cases of competitive vote buying (Wurfel, 1963). Whether one or more parties offer handouts is an empirical question, but existing surveys seldom ask which party or parties supplied them.

Mexico’s history of single-party dominance makes it a likely case of a single machine environment. Indeed, before 2000, the PRI ran what Cornelius and Craig (1991) called “a nationwide reward and punishment system”, and as late as 2012, data from the direct question in the Mexico 2012 Panel Study showed that 78 per cent of those who received a benefit in exchange for the vote were provided the benefit by the PRI (Greene, 2018). But fieldworkers have increasingly noted that other parties are distributing more electoral handouts (Casar and Ugalde, 2018; Hilgers, 2008). This development may be driven both by increasing access to resources as parties win more elected offices and by increasing voter demand. In our 2018 survey, nearly 25 per cent of respondents said that they asked for the benefits they received (see also Nichter, 2018 on Brazil).

Our data document what might be termed a relative “democratization” of hand-out provision in the 2018 elections. Figure 3 shows the proportion of targeted citizens offered a benefit by each party. The PRI made offers to 69.4 per cent of this group. Adding offers made by its coalition allies—the Partido Verde Ecologista de México (PVEM), Nueva Alianza (Panal), and an unspecified member of the Todos por México (TPM) coalition—the figure reaches 88.9 per cent. (Note that some targeted citizens received offers from multiple members of each coalition.)

Other parties distributed notable amounts of benefits as well. The PAN and PRD made offers to 35 per cent and 30.6 per cent of targeted citizens, respectively. Taken together, these parties and their coalition allies—the MC and an unspecified member of the Por México al Frente (PMF) coalition—made offers to 76.7 per cent of targeted citizens. Also notable is that Morena, its coalition partner the PT, and an unspecified member of the Juntos Haremos Historia (JHH) coalition made offers to

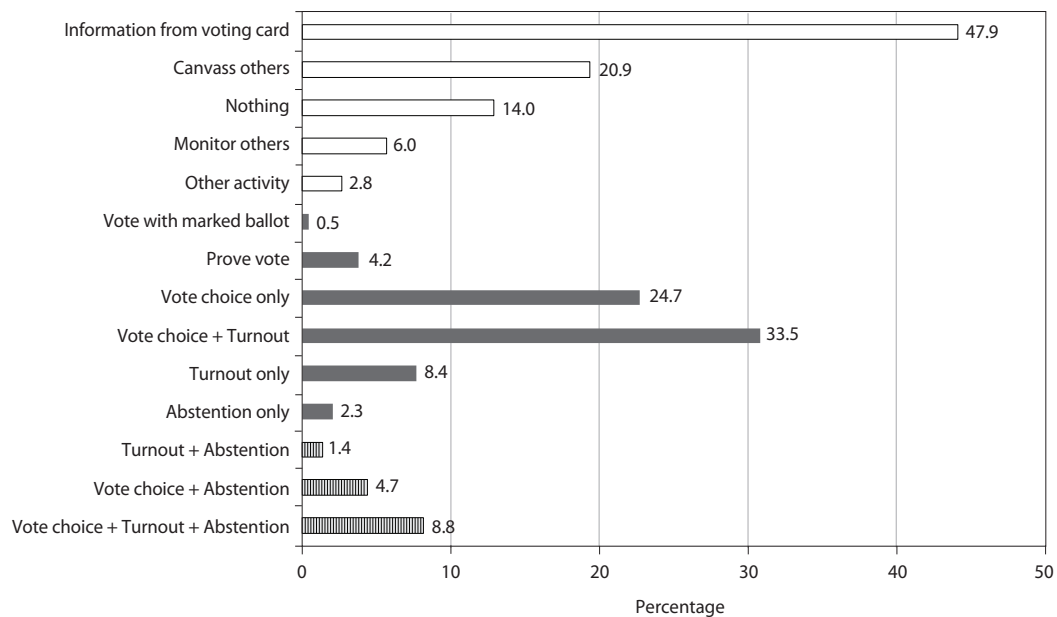
FIGURE 3. Handouts offered, by political party and coalition

Source: Greene and Simpser (2018). *Notes:* Based on 206 targeted citizens. 14 targeted citizens did not specify which party made them the offer. Mentions of different parties by the same respondent were counted separately. The coalition totals count targeted citizens only once per coalition so that offers from more than one party in the same coalition are not reflected in the figure. Mexico 2018 EQD Panel Survey.

“just” 15.5 per cent of targeted citizens. (No respondents mentioned the PES.) The winning coalition’s lower level of handout offers could reflect a moral and/or strategic decision, or it could have resulted from the simple fact that its component parties occupied fewer government offices that could provide resources for handouts.

What did recipients believe they were asked to do in return?

What counts as an illegal electoral handout is not straightforward under Mexico’s law. By itself, it is not illegal to distribute benefits or services of any monetary value to citizens, as long as the resources that fund them are of legal origin. However, Article 7 of the Law on Electoral Crimes establishes that it is illegal for anyone to: “Request votes for payment, promise of money or other consideration, or by violence or threat, to press anyone to attend proselytizing events, or to vote or abstain from voting for a candidate, political party or coalition” and Articles 7 and 11 make it illegal to condition voting behavior on the provision or suspension of benefits from social programs or any other “public service, compliance with government programs, granting concessions, permits, licenses, authorizations, franchises, or exemptions, or the creation of public works”. The law does not define what counts as soliciting or conditioning votes on the provision of benefits.

FIGURE 4. Perceived rationale for benefits offers (multiple responses permitted)

Source: Greene and Simper (2018). *Notes:* Based on 215 targeted citizens (5 targeted citizens did not specify which activities were requested of them). Multiple response options permitted. Mexico 2018 EQD Panel Survey. White bars denote activities that may be legal to buy, depending on the circumstances and origin of the funds. Solid and striped bars denote activities that are illegal to buy under current electoral law. Striped bars denote contradictory behavior on the part of the buying party.

In practice, recipients' perceptions of the rationale behind the offer of benefits probably matters most for voting behavior. That is, if recipients are compelled to comply with the machines' wishes, presumably they would comply with what they believe they were asked to do. Figure 4 shows the activities that targeted citizens thought were asked of them in exchange for the benefit offered. Multiple responses were permitted, so the data represent the proportion of recipients asked to do each activity; however, we only solicited information about the behavior requested by the party that offered what the recipient believes was the most valuable benefit. Thus, requests by other parties and coalitions are not reflected in the survey responses or in Figure 4.

White bars indicate activities that could be legal for providers to request of recipients, depending on the origin of the benefits offered. Interestingly, 14 per cent of recipients believed that their benefactors requested nothing in return, making this sort of transaction legal but a presumably inefficient form of machine politics. Other requests could also be construed as a legal use of resources, including monitoring whether others voted (6.0%) and canvassing (20.9%). Indeed, the PRI's argu-

ment following the 2012 elections was that it distributed Soriana gift cards to its activists who were employed as canvassers and poll watchers.

In the main, however, those who received offers believed they were being asked to engage in activities that political parties are not legally permitted to buy, represented by solid bars. Some were asked for their vote choice only (24.7%) and many for both their participation at the polls and their vote choice (33.5%). Presumably, these requests would be made of initial opponents, implying that the parties mostly sought to win votes away from their competitors. A much smaller proportion—8.4 per cent—were asked to participate in the election, implying less emphasis on turning out loyalists. A smaller still but notable group—2.3 per cent—were asked to abstain on election day.

The final group of activities, represented in striped bars, remain illegal for political parties to buy but are irrational from the perspective of machine politics. Some 1.4 per cent were asked to turn out and to abstain, 4.7 per cent were asked for their vote choice but also to abstain, and 8.8 per cent were asked to complete all three activities. These responses could be chalked up to classic survey measurement error, but they could also indicate a confused clientele.

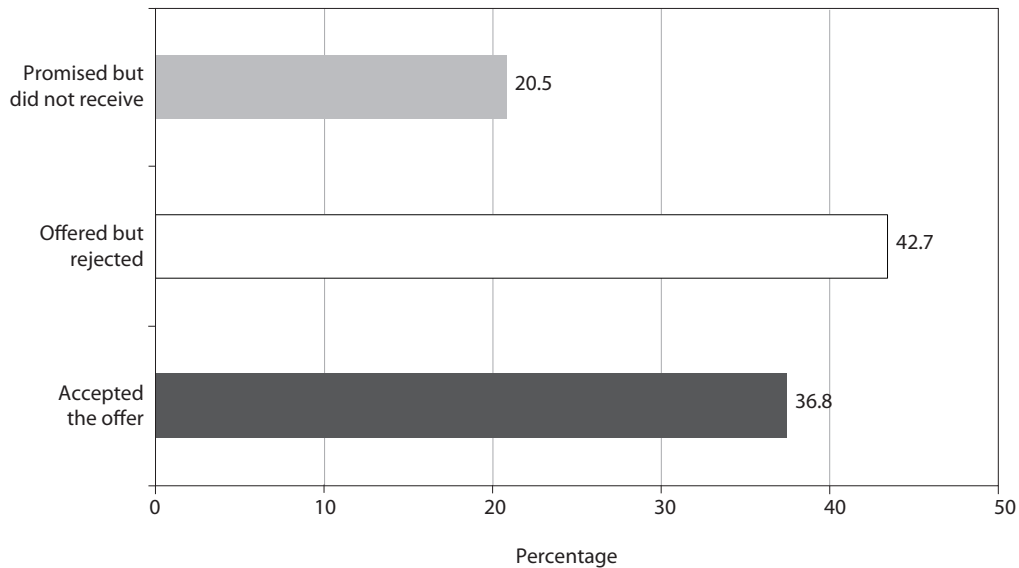
Do handouts improve electoral performance? circumstantial evidence

Mexico's elections are clearly awash in attempts to influence electoral behavior through the provision of selective benefits, but four elements should temper the concern that the national-level election outcomes are routinely altered by vote buying attempts.

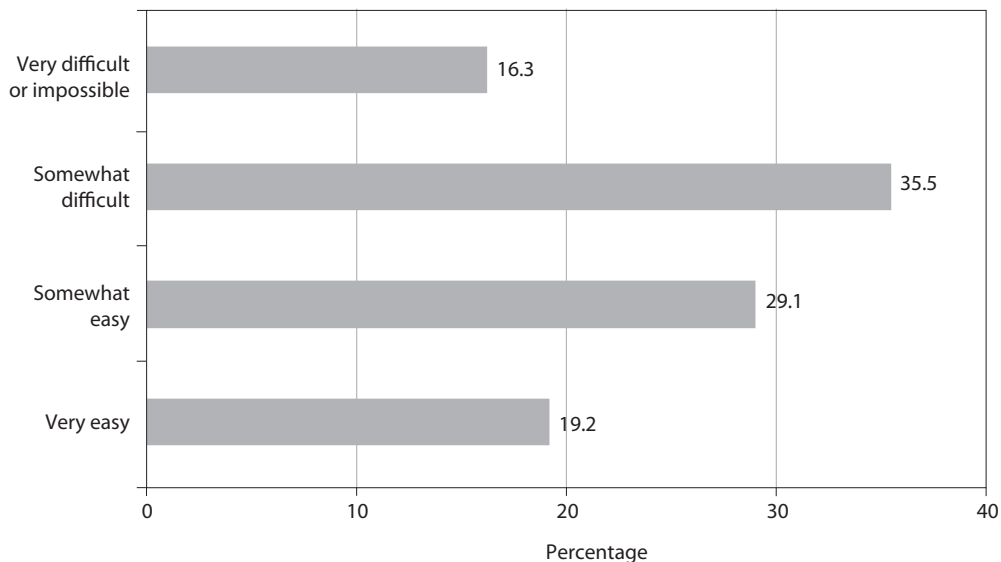
First, the findings above fail to distinguish whether citizens accepted, refused, or were promised benefits that had not been delivered by the time they were surveyed. Figure 5 shows that 42.7 per cent of targeted citizens said they rejected what they were offered. Future research might investigate the degree to which social desirability bias influences these responses. Taken at face value, however, it is notable that just 36.8 per cent of those who were offered something said they accepted it.

It is also useful to note that the lion's share of handouts is offered before election day rather than after the fact. Promises for later distribution may not be viewed as credible. For instance, following the 2012 election, numerous recipients of the Soriana cards reported that they either contained no money or substantially less than they had been promised. In our 2018 survey, 20.5 per cent of those who received an offer were promised that they would benefit after the election, yet just one person reported that they eventually received the promised benefit.

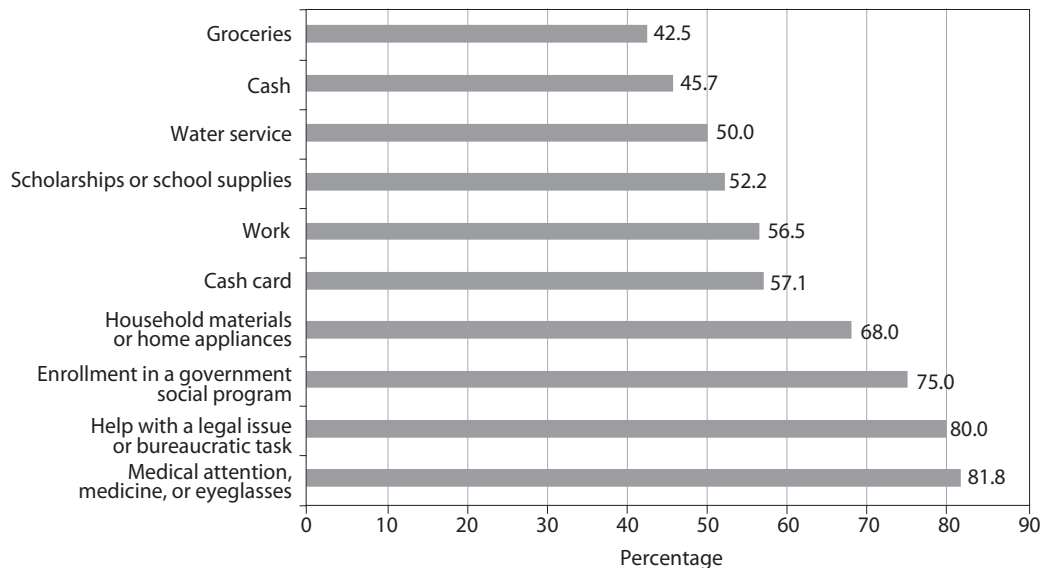
Second, even among those who reported having accepted the handout that was offered to them, the benefit they received may not have been sufficient to alter their electoral behavior. Figure 6 describes the subjective value of the most valuable electoral handout that targeted citizens were offered. Perhaps surprisingly, nearly half

FIGURE 5. Reception, acceptance, and rejection of handout offers

Source: Greene and Simper (2018). *Notes:* Based on all targeted citizens (N=220). Responses recorded in each survey wave. Only targeted citizens that rejected all offers they received are counted as “Rejected all offers”. Mexico 2018 EQD Panel Survey.

FIGURE 6. Subjective value of electoral handouts

Source: Greene and Simper (2018). *Notes:* Based on 203 targeted citizens. 17 targeted citizens did not answer the relevant questions. Respondents were asked how difficult it would be to raise resources equivalent to the most valuable gift they received. Mexico 2018 EQD Panel Survey.

FIGURE 7. Offered items that would be difficult to obtain from other sources

Source: Greene and Simpser (2018). *Notes:* For each bar, the denominator is the set of targeted citizens who reported receiving the corresponding benefit, and the numerator is the subset of these who reported that it would be difficult or impossible for them to buy the benefit themselves. Mexico 2018 EQD Panel Survey.

of recipients estimated that it would be somewhat (29.1%) or very (19.2%) easy to raise resources equivalent to the handout they were offered. Another 35.5 per cent said that it would be somewhat difficult and 16.3 per cent said it would be very difficult or impossible.

Figure 7 probes further by showing what percentage of those who were offered a specific item also reported that buying the item for themselves would be difficult or impossible. For example, 42.5 per cent of those who were offered groceries reported that it would be difficult or impossible for them to raise equivalent resources, while almost 82 per cent of those who received medical attention, medicine, or eyeglasses deemed it difficult or impossible to raise equivalent resources. Overall, the benefits that were infrequently cited as offers (Figure 2) such as enrollment in a government-sponsored social program, household materials and electro-domestic goods, free medical attention, and help with a bureaucratic task, were considered much more valuable by more respondents. The larger value of these services could reflect their market value, but may also reflect the relative difficulty of obtaining them where recipients live.

The value ascribed to two of the items listed in Figure 7 is particularly telling. On the one hand, the fact that more than 40 per cent of those who received groceries or cash deemed these difficult or impossible to buy suggests that these recipi-

ents comprised very-low-income populations. On the other hand, the fact that only 45.7 per cent of those who received a cash offer similarly rated it as difficult or impossible to raise equivalent resources implies that clients are less economically dependent than frequently assumed. Interviews and observation by one of the authors with local brokers and voters, news accounts, and 707 citizen reports to a Mexico-based election watchdog organization suggest that 500 pesos was the modal offer among those who were offered cash in 2018 (*Telemundo*, 2018; Solís, 2018; ACP, 2018).⁸

This amount represents 5.6 days of work at the 2018 minimum wage and almost a day and half of work at the average daily wage. Although one might expect this amount to represent significant value for poor recipients, survey responses imply that citizens are much less dependent on political machines than the image conjured by historical studies of 19th or early 20th century agrarian clientelism when recipients' life chances were strongly conditioned by their patrons' largesse (Baland and Robinson, 2008). More research is needed to determine how much is enough to alter electoral behavior (Becerra, 2012).

Third, the proportion of recipients who alter their behavior in response to a material offer is likely further reduced by limits on the mechanisms that machines use to ensure that clients comply with their wishes. Analysts have argued that compliance with vote-buying transactions relies on the threat of a cost to be exacted against defecting voters (Stokes, 2005; Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007). Our survey asked: "If a citizen accepts a gift from a political party in exchange for their vote but they don't vote for that party, do you think it will cause them a big problem, a little problem, or no problem at all?" ["Si un ciudadano acepta un regalo de un partido político a cambio de su voto, pero no vota por ese partido, ¿cree usted que le causarían problemas serios, problemas menores, o no le causarían ningún problema?"]. In the post-election wave of our survey, 10.6 per cent of targeted citizens said they would experience a serious problem, 11.5 per cent said they would have a minor problem, and a full 77.9 per cent said they would not experience any problem at all. These figures cast doubt on the threat of retaliation as a useful means for ensuring broad compliance of handout recipients with their end of the bargain, at least in contemporary Mexico.

Our data also suggest that attempts to directly monitor vote choices may be much less frequent than often assumed. Figure 4 reports that just 4.2 per cent of targeted citizens said they were asked to photograph their marked ballot and only one respondent reported that they actually did so. In addition, just one person reported that they were asked to vote with a pre-marked ballot, presumably part of the oft-

⁸ Casar and Ugalde (2018) estimate that the average cost per vote was about 750 pesos in recent elections.

reported technique of “carrousel voting”. Indeed, this one person reported having complied. If we take these findings at face value, then direct monitoring of vote choices through the means explored in the survey was nearly non-existent in 2018.

It is possible that parties instead rely on the goodwill of recipients for compliance. Indeed, there is evidence that political machines may attempt to target recipients who demonstrate high levels of reciprocity (Finan and Schechter, 2012) or even to activate these feelings as a low-cost compliance mechanism (Lawson and Greene, 2014). If so, our primary measure of reciprocity as an attitude scarcely captured it: only 14.1 per cent of targeted citizens said they strongly agreed with the phrase “One should always return favors” [“Siempre hay que regresar los favores que alguien nos hace”.] in the post-election survey wave. This figure is 3.6 percentage points higher than the proportion of non-targeted citizens that held the same attitude, implying that recipients of handout offers either are initially more reciprocal, or the offer itself renders them more reciprocal (it is also possible that the vote buying attempt influences the way they respond to the survey question, although we see no obvious reason why that would be the case). However, the figure for targeted citizens is sufficiently low that reciprocity is unlikely to serve as a main compliance mechanism.

Finally, electoral returns imply that vote-buying attempts did not determine which candidate won the presidency. In the final tally, López Obrador won 53.19 per cent of the vote, nearly 31 percentage points beyond that of his closest competitor, Ricardo Anaya of the Forward Mexico [Por México al Frente] coalition at 22.28 per cent and nearly 37 percentage points above José Antonio Meade of the Everyone for Mexico [Todos por México] coalition. Yet Figure 3 shows that López Obrador Together We Will Make History [Juntos Haremos Historia] coalition accounted for a relatively small proportion of electoral handouts. If our post-election panel wave is representative of the electorate as a whole, then parties supporting López Obrador made non-trivial offers to slightly less than 5 per cent of voters. Even if all of these attempts were effective—a very unlikely outcome given the findings documented in this section of the article—and none of the other coalition’s attempts were effective, vote buying would account for less than one-third of López Obrador’s winning margin. By the same token, Anaya’s vote total was scarcely higher than the percentage of voters that received offers from his coalition and Meade’s vote total was nearly 10 percentage points below the proportion that his coalition attempted to buy. It stretches credulity to believe that all of their votes were won through the selective provision of goods and services.⁹

⁹ López Obrador’s JHH coalition made non-trivial offers to 29 respondents, representing 14.1 per cent of targeted citizens as shown in Figure 3. The post-election survey wave interviewed 583 citizens, implying that JHH made offers to $29/583=4.97$ per cent of the electorate. Anaya’s PMF coalition made offers to $115/583=19.7$ per cent of voters and Meade’s TPM coalition made offers to $148/583=25.4$ per cent.

It seems obvious that vote-buying attempts have limited power to win votes, but more work is needed to find those limits. Existing research argues that vote buying falters when political machines target the wrong voters (Carlin and Moseley, 2015; Greene, 2018; Schaffer and Baker, 2015; Stokes *et al.*, 2013; Weitz-Shapiro, 2014), when voters become too rich to buy at an affordable rate (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007), or when institutional reforms diminish political machines' access to public resources and illicit private donations that can be used as electoral handouts (Shefter, 1977). It is unlikely that these conditions held in Mexico in 2018.


Vote-buying attempts could have influenced the competing parties' vote shares and possibly the outcomes of down-ballot races —themes that we do not explore here— but the evidence presented strongly implies that the provision of selective benefits did not determine which candidate won. It is even possible, opposite much of the literature, that vote buying attempts turned recipients away from the offering parties, particularly in an election where fighting corruption was one of the main campaign issues and the flagship issue of the eventual winner, Morena.

CONCLUSION

Mexico's transition to fully competitive democracy has focused on creating fair elections so that political parties representing a variety of ideologies and social interests could compete on a level playing field with the PRI and with each other. One pillar of support for electoral fairness involved the control of illicit money in politics, a process that culminated in nearly complete public financing of electoral campaigns. Another pillar involved the construction of independent, large-scale, professional electoral management institutions capable of rooting out fraud, imposing sanctions on the malfeasant, and creating public trust in the outcome of elections where little existed previously. By most accounts, Mexico was extraordinarily successful in these pursuits, allowing for the peaceful handover of power between rival political groups, running elections that domestic and international observers hail as free and fair, and building world-leading institutions to carry the substantial load of doing so. In many ways, 2018 signaled these institutions' crowning achievement by overseeing the runaway victory of a candidate from the left, which had never held the presidency despite having greatly contributed to Mexico's democratization.

Notwithstanding these genuine achievements, potential problems bubble beneath the surface. As the analyses we review in the first section show, attempts to buy electoral support never faded from Mexico's politics. Differences in survey timing, questioning approach, and wording make comparisons across surveys imperfect, but electoral clientelism appears to trend upward. Even as parties establish broadly recognized name brands, gain reputations in government, and invest heavily in standard campaigns, their use of electoral handouts —many of them illegal—

appears to have increased since 2000. It is even plausible that the very regulations designed to level the playing field through aggressive control of legitimate campaign finances have encouraged the parties to seek advantage by spending illicit money on street-level brokered politics. Worse still, the difficulty of proving vote buying in a court of law renders routine vote brokerage nearly untouchable (TEPJF, 2012).

One reading of the 2018 elections is that the front-runner won handily despite prevalent vote buying by rival parties. But even though electoral clientelism failed to change who won the presidency, it could influence down-ballot races as has been argued for electoral clientelism in Brazil (Nichter, 2018), it may increase tolerance of political corruption (De la O, 2015), and it could erode public trust in electoral outcomes—a theme that we explore in depth elsewhere. Mexico already displays one of the lowest levels of support for democracy in Latin America (LAPOP), making it more vulnerable than one might expect given its history of investment in high-quality election management institutions. 

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APPENDIX

TABLE A1. Survey questions from Mexico EQD

Variable	Survey question	Answer options
Inventory of benefits received, refused, and promised in either survey wave	If in 2018 a party gave, offer, or promised any gift, service, favor, or employment...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bag of groceries • Cash • A supermarket, telephone, or bank card • An empty gift card to be charged after the elections • Building materials (such as cement, brick, metal sheet, water tank, or paint) or any appliance • Water pipe service • Gifts (such as caps, shirts or toys) • Registration to government aid (such as Prospera, Seguro Popular, Adultos Mayores) • Employment
	What did they give you?	
	What did they offer?	
	What did they promise?	
The relative Democratization of benefits provision	If in 2018 a party gave, offer, or promised any gift, service, favor, or employment...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PAN • PRI • PRD • Morena • PVEM-Partido Verde • PT-Partido del Trabajo • MC-Movimiento Ciudadano • Panal-Nueva Alianza • Juntos Haremos Historia (Morena + PT + PES) • Por México al Frente (PAN + PRD + MC) • Todos por México (PRI + PVEM + Panal) • Independent candidate
	Which party gave?	
	Which party offered?	
	Which party promised?	
Perceived rationale for benefits offers	In exchange, where you asked or suggested to vote for any of the party—or coalition— candidates?	Yes No
	Where you asked for anything else?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A photograph, a copy or information from my voter ID Go vote Bring other people to vote Not to vote Convince other people to vote for that party Go to campaign events and/or bring other people My address and/or my telephone number Other, not listed I was not asked for anything else

TABLE A1. Survey questions from Mexico EQD (continuation)

Variable	Survey question	Answer options
Detail on electoral handout offers/ vote buying	In 2018, have you received any gift, service, favor or employment from a party?	Yes No
	In 2018, have you rejected any gift, service, favor or employment offered by a party?	
	Before election day this year, did any party promised you any gift, service, favor, or work?	
The subjective value of electoral handout offers	How difficult would it be for you to save money to have or buy what they gave or promised?	Very easy Somewhat easy Somewhat difficult Very difficult or impossible
Education	What is your education?	No education Elementary School Junior High High School Technical School College Masters degree PhD
Female	Sex	Male Female
Age	How old are you?	Open-ended question
Social program recipient	Are you a beneficiary or receive money from governmental programs such as <i>Prospera</i> , <i>Procampo</i> , <i>Becas</i> , <i>Ayuda a madres solteras</i> , <i>adultos mayores</i> , or any other federal or state programs?	Yes No
Household socioeconomic status	Which of the next statements best describes the financial situation in your household?	Money is not enough to cover basic needs We can afford to buy basic items, but it is difficult to buy clothes We can afford to buy basic items and clothes but not appliances We can afford to buy appliances but not luxury items We can afford to buy luxury items

TABLE A1. Survey questions from Mexico EQD (continuation)

Variable	Survey question	Answer options
Electoral integrity	Please state if you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statements...	
	Electoral results announced by electoral authorities can be trusted	Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree
Corrupt should be pardoned	The corrupt must be pardoned to ensure stability of the country	Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree
Extract from candidates	During electoral campaigns one must take as much as possible from the candidates because later they forget about you.	Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree
Democratic attitudes	Under some circumstances an authoritarian government is preferable over a democratic one	Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree
Reciprocity	One must always pay back the favors someone does for us	Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree
Secret ballot	My vote is always kept secret unless I choose to tell anyone.	Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree
Perceived prevalence of vote buying	In your neighborhood, how common is it that a candidate, party, or public servant offers money, favors or employment to people within the neighborhood in exchange for their vote?	Very common Somewhat common Uncommon Never happens
Political interest	How interested are you in politics?	Very interested Somewhat interested Little interest No interest
Politica talk	How frequently do you speak to others about politics?	Daily A few times a week A few times a month Rarely Never

TABLE A1. Survey questions from Mexico EQD (continuation)

Variable	Survey question	Answer options
AMLO vote, w2 Meade vote, w2 Anaya vote, w2	Who did you vote for in the last presidential election? To preserve your privacy, I will give you a sheet to mark your answer.	Andrés Manuel López Obrador-Square for Morena Andrés Manuel López Obrador-Square for PT Andrés Manuel López Obrador-Square for PES Ricardo Anaya Cortés-Square for PAN Ricardo Anaya Cortés-Square for PRD Ricardo Anaya Cortés-Square for Movimiento Ciudadano José Antonio Meade-Square for PRI José Antonio Meade-Square for PVEM José Antonio Meade-Square for PANAL (Nueva Alianza) Margarita Zavala-Independiente Jaime Rodríguez (El Bronco)-Independiente Marked more than one square of different parties Marked more than one square for López Obrador Marked more than one square for Anaya Marked more than one square Meade Marked the whole ballot or scratched it Voted blank

Source: Greene and Simpser (2018).

Criminal Contagion

How Governor Detentions Weakened the PRI

Milena Ang*

ABSTRACT: Recent years have witnessed an unprecedented rise of Mexican governors prosecuted and incarcerated for corruption, most of which were from the ruling party PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional). Could these judicial cases partly explain the resounding electoral loss suffered by the PRI party in 2018? In this paper, I argue that the criminal behavior of PRI governors who were prosecuted affected the PRI's most recent presidential electoral outcome. First, I argue that this criminal behavior affected the partisan reputation of the PRI. I illustrate this claim by showing that these criminal actions were often referenced by the media as evidence not only of individual malfeasance but of networks—embodied in the PRI party—that had enabled the criminal behavior. Second, I argue that these discourses affected electoral choice. I propose that if these discourses were indeed affecting the PRI vote, we should observe lower support for PRI among voters that are most exposed to these discourses such as voters of places with criminal governors and voters in districts with higher access to internet. Using a difference-in-differences setup and a cross-sectional analysis, I show that both of these groups indeed voted less frequently for the PRI. I conclude the paper by discussing the aftermath of the election and what the existence of this contagion means for partisan accountability.

KEYWORDS: corruption prosecution, elections, political parties, governors.

Contagio criminal: Cómo las detenciones de gobernadores debilitaron al PRI

RESUMEN: En los últimos años se ha producido un aumento sin precedentes de gobernadores mexicanos procesados y encarcelados por corrupción, la mayoría de los cuales pertenecían al partido gobernante, el Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). ¿Podrían estos casos judiciales explicar en parte la estrepitosa pérdida electoral sufrida por el PRI en 2018? En este artículo, sostengo que

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el comportamiento criminal de los gobernadores priistas que fueron procesados afectó el más reciente resultado electoral presidencial del PRI. Primero, argumento que este comportamiento criminal afectó la reputación partidaria del PRI. Ilustro esta afirmación mostrando que estas acciones criminales fueron a menudo referidas por los medios de comunicación como evidencia no sólo de malversación individual, sino de redes —encarnadas en el PRI— que habían permitido el comportamiento criminal. En segundo lugar, sostengo que estos discursos afectaron el voto. Propongo que, si estos discursos estaban efectivamente afectando el voto del PRI, deberíamos observar menor apoyo al PRI entre los votantes que están más expuestos a estos discursos, como los votantes de lugares con gobernadores corruptos y los votantes de distritos con mayor acceso a internet. Utilizando una estrategia de diferencias en diferencias y un análisis transversal, muestro que ambos grupos en efecto votaron con menos frecuencia por el PRI. Concluyo el artículo discutiendo las consecuencias de la elección y lo que significa la existencia de este contagio para la rendición de cuentas partidista.

PALABRAS CLAVE: escándalos de corrupción, elecciones, partidos políticos, gobernadores.

INTRODUCTION

Although Mexican governors have long been accused of being corrupt, it was only until recently that they were frequently investigated and charged for it. Recent research reports that during the last *sexenio* before democratization —from 1994 to 2000— only four governors were investigated at the federal level (Ang, 2017), whereas during the administration of the PRI president Enrique Peña Nieto (2012-2018), over 15 local executives have been investigated and at least eight have been issued an arrest warrant. These detentions occur in a country where 48 per cent of respondents in a nationally representative survey mentioned corruption as one of the issues to be solved, just after insecurity and unemployment (INEGI, 2017).

Importantly, however, not all the parties were equal contributors to the pool of prosecuted governors. Of the eight prosecuted local executives that governed during Peña Nieto, seven of them were his co-partisans. This overrepresentation of *priistas* was noted, emphasized even, in the 2018 electoral campaigns that portrayed the PRI as an institution built to protect or enable corruption. Indeed, the presidential candidate who would ultimately win the election, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), centered his campaign around fighting corruption and criminal behavior and getting rid of the *mafia del poder*, political mafia, that had encroached in the federal and local administrations. During the campaigns it was also not uncommon to find newspaper editorials and pundits echoing the idea that the ruling PRI party had enabled or protected local executives that had illegally diverted millions of pesos.

Of course, these prosecutions have had important repercussions for the political figure of the governors. Once dubbed the new *virreyes* (Meza, 2009; Zuckermann, 2003), a term that signaled their almost absolute power and impunity, governors nowadays seem to be more and more vulnerable. In an unprecedented move, former Veracruz governor Javier Duarte, stepped down from his administration when

faced with accusations of corruption (only to flee from the country). Former Durango governor Jorge Herrera Caldera requested an *amparo* (legal protection) against his possible detention, a request that was denied because he was not being investigated in the first place (Lastra Guerrero, 2016). This political weakening of the gubernatorial figure is also tangible in electoral results: governors that have been prosecuted have cost the governorship to their parties.

Despite the abundance of anecdotal evidence connecting criminal prosecution and party reputation or electoral results, research still needs to answer whether—and how—criminal corruption of a single individual affects party-level electoral results. Thus, the questions that motivate this paper are: What were the consequences of the criminal prosecutions of *priista* governors for the PRI party? Specifically, did the detentions of PRI governors polluted the PRI's presidential electoral result? And if so, why?

This paper answers these questions by arguing that the criminal prosecution of local executives had two related effects. First, the public discussion that arose from the detention was less about the individuals and the crimes they had been accused of, and more about the political structure that produced the criminal behavior in question. Specifically, I present qualitative evidence to show that discourses in the media saw these detentions as evidence of a larger network of complicities that had enabled the malfeasance revealed by the prosecutions. Furthermore, I show that these networks were often embodied in the institution of the PRI, a discourse that is somewhat counterintuitive given that these prosecutions were conducted by a *priista* president.

Secondly, I argue that this public discourse portraying the PRI as a party that enabled criminal behavior weakened the partisan brand, decreased the appeal of PRI candidates, and directly impacted the presidential electoral results. I demonstrate this point by presenting a difference-in-differences analysis of district-level electoral outcomes for the PRI presidential candidates in 2012 (Enrique Peña Nieto) and in 2018 (José Antonio Meade), and a cross-sectional analysis of PRI vote across districts with different access to such discourses. In this analysis, I show that although the PRI suffered considerably nation-wide, its electoral losses were even higher in states that had a criminal governor. I also find that districts with higher internet access voted less for the PRI, even after controlling for socioeconomic characteristics that might be related to internet access and PRI vote choice. Both of these groups of voters, I argue, are more likely to be exposed to public media and discourses of systemic corruption. I conclude the paper by discussing key implications of the existence of this mechanism: as corrupt behavior is made public and the electoral consequences of prosecution become more apparent for political parties, party leadership seems to be interested, and able, to discipline their members, or even publicly repudiate, for engaging in criminal behavior.

CORRUPTION AND CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR

The questions addressed in this paper are relevant considering that free and fair elections are a way in which citizens can hold their government officials accountable for wrongdoings. Elections enable citizens to hire (elect) or fire (not reelect) public officials (Manin *et al.*, 1999b; Adsera *et al.*, 2003) based on their performance and actions in government (Manin *et al.*, 1999a; Grzymala-Busse, 2007). Of course, the relationship between governmental actions and accountability might not be so straightforward. First, elections are a diffuse accountability mechanism because voters must consider a multiplicity of topics in a single election, topics that can and often are prioritized differently (Cheibub and Przeworski, 1999). Second, elections are also a weak tool for accountability because they entail choosing a candidate from a fixed set of alternatives. Thus, voting is not only a matter of looking at an incumbent's performance, but also considering what the rest of the politicians can offer and how credible that offer is (Maravall, 1999).

Existing literature has examined at length the link between corruption and corruption scandals and vote choice. Research has shown that learning about malfeasance of politicians negatively affects campaigning strategies and reelection rates (Rennó, 2008) and decreases vote intention for candidates accused of such malfeasance (Chang *et al.*, 2010). These effects, however, are mediated by individual factors like risk propensity (Morgenstern and Zechmeister, 2001), the opinion on the state of the economy (Klašnja and Tucker, 2013), or whether the voters benefitted from corruption.¹ A different literature also looks at how context shapes the effect of corruption on vote choice, highlighting the role of media and how the coverage of malfeasance and its intensity shape voters' choice (Ferraz and Finan, 2005; Chang *et al.*, 2010).

But not all findings suggest that voters will react to the abuse of public office. Comparative empirical evidence has found that corruption scandals can reach a point of saturation in which the voters become somewhat resilient to the wrongdoings of politicians, and stop punishing them electorally (Kumlin and Esaiasson, 2012). In addition, practices such as clientelism and patronage can prevent voters from freely exercising their right to choose, further weakening the link between information and electoral accountability. Studies of clientelism in Japan and Mexico have shown that clientelistic practices gives incumbents an excessive advantage (Scheiner, 2006; Magaloni, 2006), while also deteriorating the quality of opposition,² and even rendering it incapable of positioning themselves as clear alternative in terms of differentiated policy proposals (Grzymala-Busse, 2007).

¹ A paper studying the Spanish housing boom and the ensuing rise in scandals found that voters are willing to reward corruption if it is beneficial for them (Fernández-Vázquez *et al.*, 2016).

² Since the opposition cannot gain government expertise, its quality decreases (Morgenstern and Zechmeister, 2001).

The existing research, however, has been mostly interested in corruption scandals, and has used corruption detentions as a proxy measure of the former, thus addressing a somewhat different set of questions than the ones set forth at the beginning of this section. The few studies that separate the effects of corruption scandals and corruption detentions on vote choice have found that indeed the latter have effects that are distinguishable from the former,³ a finding that suggests that these two are distinct empirical phenomena with different political effects. In addition, the literature reviewed above has mostly focused in understanding the electoral effects of corruption scandals and detentions as they affect politicians involved in corruption scandals, overlooking the effects that they might have on other political actors and institutions.

This last limitation has been partially addressed by the comparative literature that has looked into how corruption and its prosecution can affect public trust (Chandler, 2006). More specifically, evidence on China, Japan, and South Korea also reports that the perception that the government is efficiently fighting corruption can positively impact trust in institutions (Kim and Voorhees, 2011). These findings are promising for the use of the criminal justice system when it comes to political corruption, but they still cannot address whether prosecution of corruption affects political parties and their electoral performance.

Why should parties suffer the consequences of their members' actions, particularly when these are already being prosecuted? Put differently: what mechanism might trigger consequences for co-partisans of an indicted politician? To answer this question, I borrow from the established notion that parties can serve as informational shortcuts, fulfilling the crucial function of conveying information to voters to help them cast a vote when information about specific candidates is scarce or too costly to acquire. Specifically, I borrow from this literature to argue that in the same way that party labels might be associated with ideological leanings or specific policies that are taken as information about candidates, parties can also be associated with widespread corruption. If this is the case, parties can inform (or misinform) voters whether candidates are likely to engage in, or cover up, corrupt behavior. I further develop this argument in the remainder of this section.

The idea of parties as heuristics, developed mostly in the study of American parties, originates from the assumption that voters make choices in an environment of great uncertainty and where information acquisition is costly. In these environments, parties can be seen as 'labels' that convey information to the voters about policy views, qualities, and other attributes of their candidates. In his classical work,

³ For example, research on corruption scandals and corruption prosecution among mayors in Spain found that prosecuting had a much larger impact in vote choice than corruption (Costas-Pérez *et al.*, 2012), and a study of Mexican legislators found that criminalizing governors affected co-partisan electoral performance across parties (Ang, 2019).

Downs convincingly argues that voters must acquire information in order to cast a vote, but that the cost of acquiring such information is, in many cases, larger than the expected utility from casting a well-informed vote (Downs, 1957). Thus, he concluded, voters in general will not make any additional efforts, instead relying on whatever information they can easily encounter. Empirical research in the US shows that in the absence of complete information, voters rely on ‘heuristics’ to make choices (Ferejohn, 1990; Iyengar, 1990), and that partisanship is one of the most accessible ones (Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1990; Schaffner and Streb, 2002). Studies conducted in the case of Mexico show that party cues are helpful for voters and that the usefulness of this heuristics increases as topics become more complex (Merolla *et al.*, 2007; Guardado Rodríguez, 2009).

The literature of party as heuristics, then, suggests that party labels help voters summarize relevant information to help them decide which candidate to vote for. I build from this logic to claim that if parties inform voters about their candidates, it is possible that the actions of candidates and incumbents also inform voters about the parties that these politicians belong to. My claim finds motivation in—and contributes to—scholarship studying why and how the behavior of party members can weaken party brands. Barrow (2007), for example, studies how candidates that switch parties weakens the relationship between voters and their parties, offering evidence from the Mexican state of Morelos to illustrate this claim. Lupu (2016) argues that conflict between members of the same party can dilute a party brand because voters will be less certain about what the parties stand for. Put differently, exiting literature has claimed already that some actions by party members can affect party brands, and can weaken the links between parties and their voters. My proposed mechanism posits that trials involving allegedly corrupt politicians can also affect the party label of those being prosecuted by associating such party with criminal behavior. Weakening the party brand should, in turn, affect the electoral results for candidates that share parties with the alleged criminal, but that have not been accused of any wrongdoing.

Importantly, however, I do not expect my proposed mechanism to work equally across all countries, nor even in all parties within a same country. Instead, I propose that some electoral characteristics can accentuate—or mitigate—the connection between the candidate’s (criminal) behavior and partisan-level consequences. Although originally developed to classify legislative elections, I draw from Carey and Shugart’s proposition that some electoral systems cultivate strong party reputations, instead of strong individual reputations, as a way to garner votes (Carey and Shugart, 1995), as well as from Samuel’s subsequent paper, who argued that parties’ strategies vary even within an electoral system (Samuels, 1999). The proposed mechanism—associating poor behavior of a candidate to his or her party—will be less likely when politicians are actively trying to differentiate themselves from other

party members, and more likely when candidates want to be identified with their party precisely to exploit partisan reputation to their own advantage.

Based on the characteristics identified by these authors, I argue that Mexican presidential elections are likely to incentivize party reputations, fostering the connection between candidate actions and party behavior. For example, the PRI operates with a centralized ballot, meaning that parties must support the candidate and voters cannot ‘disturb’ this, thus strengthening candidate allegiance to party structures (Samuels, 1999: 492-493; Carey and Shugart, 1995: 420-421). In addition, Mexico publicly funds its parties, which means that the candidate’s access to campaign finance resources is mediated by the party, deepening the candidate’s dependence on keeping the party leadership happy. Similarly, political candidates often rely on the ample PRI structure to deliver pork, although such structure is mostly responsive to local leaders, not central ones, and has therefore been weakened during the last two decades (Cantú and Desposato, 2012). Finally, although there are some opportunities for electoral alliances, which might weaken the incentives to build a party reputation, the PRI tends to build alliances with the same small parties, minimizing damage to its brand. Therefore, the PRI’s structure and dynamics when it came to determining presidential candidates—a structure that had remained quite strong until this last electoral cycle—strengthened the connection between the party itself and its candidates, making it more likely to observe the posited mechanism.

Considering this, my argument is that criminalization of individual politicians, under certain conditions like the ones discussed here, can affect not only those directly involved in the criminal process, but also those who share the same party label. As discussed in previous paragraphs, this ‘contagion’ occurs partly because criminal behavior of politicians might affect party reputation. Since voters use parties as heuristics to convey information about candidates, belonging to the same party than someone accused of wrongdoing can impact one’s electoral performance. As I will show in the next section, I find evidence that the criminal cases involving PRI governors were often related to the PRI party structures in general, thus evidencing the contagion mechanism posited here. In this way, the Mexican 2018 elections suggest that putting a single politician in jail does not simply weaken him or her, but also the institutional networks that such politician is a part of, particularly parties. Specifically, I show that José Antonio Meade, the PRI presidential candidate, suffered electorally as a consequence of the criminal processes opened against his fellow co-partisans.

So far, I have discussed criminal behavior broadly, but this paper focuses empirically on criminal behavior of Mexican governors understood as either political corruption or collusion with organized crime. Before introducing evidence to support my claim, I discuss why I focus on these types of criminal behavior among this

particular set of actors. To be clear, I have no theoretical reasons to argue that specific criminal behavior is more or less likely to damage a party's reputation, nor do I argue that prosecution of specific actors will always result in consequences for his or her party. Instead, I propose that contextual characteristics of each political system can illuminate the relevance of politicians—the more relevant the actors, the more likely are they to affect the party brand—and that the type of criminal behavior they are accused of affects their parties' reputation differently. I discuss these two characteristics in the Mexican context to further clarify the relevance of the actors and behavior studied in this paper.

Contextually, Mexican governors are powerful actors that have unfettered access to large sums of money. Since the decentralization reforms that started in the 1990s, Mexican governors receive large federal transfers and can acquire public debt with little oversight which has led to unlawful mismanagement and appropriation of funds.⁴ Furthermore, governors also face almost no constraints when in power: the presidential “winner-take-all” arrangement means that executives are often popular politicians that had to win a direct popular vote and that, institutionally, lack a counterpart to restrain their use (or misuse) of power (Linz, 1985; Mainwaring and Shugart, 1997). Governor's control of local bureaucracies and nominations of candidates for national legislators also means that parties often bow to them (Langston, 2010; Cantú and Desposato, 2012). In this way, governors in Mexico are likely actors to affect party reputations because of their importance within the hierarchy, an importance exacerbated by the amount of resources they control when in office.

These characteristics of the gubernatorial office, as well as the context of organized crime, increases the opportunities of governors engaging in criminal behavior of two types: political corruption and criminal corruption,⁵ both of which I argue are likely to trigger the “contagion” effect. By political corruption I mean that governors can divert funds from the public resources they command: the proverbial cookie jar in the form of almost unsupervised federal transfers. By criminal corruption I mean that governors can collude with organized crime by, for example, receiving bribes and kickbacks for letting criminal groups operate in certain parts of their jurisdiction. Crucially, both of these types of criminal actions are abuses that could only be committed by those with access to public power: any abuse of such responsibility

⁴ Many of the recent gubernatorial corruption scandals involve local executives that acquired astronomical amounts of public debt. For example, a report on the 2016 elections pointed out that among the states with gubernatorial elections, the highest indebted states were Veracruz, Quintana Roo, and Chihuahua. The governors of these three states have since been prosecuted for corruption (*Expansión*, 2016). Existing analyses on local finances and political cycles agree that governors strategically plan public debt and expenditures with political purposes, although the extent and institutional determinants of these practices is still in question (Velázquez Guadarrama, 2006; Ramírez Rodríguez and Erquízio Espinal, 2012; Armesto, 2015).

⁵ I am grateful to an anonymous *Política y Gobierno* reviewer who pointed out this distinction.

would breach the mandate entrusted by voters when they elected these politicians. On the contrary, criminal behavior like shoplifting or stealing a vehicle breaks the law but will not necessarily damage public trust, and as such it is less likely to trigger the mechanism set forth here. Hence, criminal behavior that breaks the trust placed in an official elected to public office is more likely to affect the party reputation than breaking the law without abusing public office.

From this discussion, I hypothesize that the PRI governors that were criminally prosecuted affected the overall party standing in the 2018 elections in two distinct but related ways. First, I propose that the PRI's reputation suffered considerable damages as a consequence of the prosecution of its governors. This phenomenon is observable in that the public discourses surrounding the criminal processes often transcend the specific cases that motivated the discourse by referring to networks that enabled the criminal behavior, and these networks are often embodied in the PRI. Second, I propose that this reputational loss directly impacted vote choice *even in races where no candidates had been criminally prosecuted or investigated*. This, I argue, means that voters considered the criminal corruption cases and used this to inform their vote choice. In this way, the reputational and electoral effects of criminal prosecution are not only limited to those involved in a legal case (Ang, 2019), but they can also damage political parties and their candidates in other races.

The remainder of this paper provides evidence to support this argument, and it does so in two analytically distinct, but complementary, steps. Next section shows the PRI's reputational loss as a consequence of the arrests and criminalization of PRI governors. Specifically, I show how these arrests helped build and strengthen the narrative of the PRI as an institutional network that enabled corruption and provided impunity for candidates. Section "How arrests (and the PRI) affected its presidential candidate" develops two testable implications of the claim that these narratives had an electoral impact that affected the PRI presidential candidate, and presents quantitative evidence comparing the 2012 and 2018 elections to corroborate them. Section "Discussion and implications" concludes by discussing the immediate aftermath of the elections and the theoretical implications of the phenomena described here.

HOW ARRESTS AFFECTED THE PRI

As stated in the previous section, the first part of my argument is that criminalization of specific individuals can be taken as evidence that entire networks of institutions are complacent, if not complicit, with corrupt practices. I develop this argument by showing that the arrests shaped public discourse around the PRI. Specifically, I present qualitative evidence to illustrate that specific arrests were not seen only as cases of individuals abusing their public office, but as cases that evidenced how a party enabled the criminal behavior that detentions had revealed.

Nowhere was this clearer than during the detention of “the worst governor in history”, (Agren, 2018) Veracruz’ Javier Duarte (2010-2016). From the very beginning of his term, Duarte was publicly accused of irregularities⁶ and the intensification of violence under his government, including murdered journalists. But in May of 2016, a month before the elections for governor, an investigation denounced that Duarte’s administration had been embezzling millions of dollars using a network of shell companies (*Animal Político*, 2016). Faced with the accusations, Duarte stepped down just a few weeks before the end of his term, claiming that he would “face his accusations”. Two days after this resignation, he vanished, only to be arrested in Guatemala in April of 2017.

Undoubtedly, Duarte’s case impacted the figure of the PRI the most. Duarte’s figure has become a reference when talking about criminal corruption, partly because he embodied depredation to an almost deranged degree.⁷ Partly, however, the sheer size of his embezzlement operation suggests that he operated with the knowledge, if not the active participation, of dozens of public servants or politicians who turned a blind eye to his practices. Thus, it is not uncommon to find op-eds and political analysis suggesting that Duarte’s detention not only evidences his personal criminal actions, but the existence of networks and institutions that enabled it. Statements like “Duarte is proof that corruption is not the work of a single person, but of a network of links and complicities that involved both public and private people” (Peschard, 2017) or “[the] courts should call the former public servants, the front men and the accomplices that enabled [Duarte’s] big theft”⁸ describe how the case of Duarte evokes institutions and actors beyond himself.

But Javier Duarte was not the only politician to be described in this way. Similar statements are made regarding other PRI governors also prosecuted for corruption. An investigation surrounding Quintana Roo’s former governor Roberto Borge (2011-2016) was dubbed “The Pirates of Borge,” a reference to the networks involving more than 50 of his collaborators accused of participating in defrauding the public (Ibarra and Meza, 2016). César Duarte —former governor of Chihuahua who was arrested in Miami in July, 2020, after years of being fugitive— was also accused of operating within a network of politicians and operators that enabled his illicit enrichment (Torres Cofiño, 2017).

In all of these cases, the PRI is often identified as the network that enabled corruption and impunity. This association between the party and its candidates was

⁶ For example, in 2012 two of his collaborators were arrested while travelling on a state-owned aircraft and carrying suitcases full of cash (*Animal Político*, 2012).

⁷ In January of 2017, Miguel Ángel Yunes, Veracruz governor after Duarte left power, denounced that Duarte’s administration had allowed the purchase of fraudulent medicine, intended to treat children with cancer (Excélsior, 2017).

⁸ “Yes, the capture of Javier Duarte is a step, but it is only the first. The former officials and also the front men and accomplices who made the great possible robbery must appear before the courts” (Angel, 2017).

not haphazard: right before the 2012 election, PRI candidate Peña Nieto appeared in the TV show *Tercer Grado* (2012), where he supported the “young actors of the new political generation” of the PRI, and listed Quintana Roo’s governor Beto Borge, Veracruz’ César Duarte, and Chihuahua’s César Duarte, all of whom were prosecuted years later. In doing so, the presidential candidate not only branded his party as renovated—a label that lost its persuasiveness a few years after—but also distinctly created a group of “new” or “renovated” politicians affiliated with the PRI. Therefore, claims like “the *priisimo* made of corruption a lifestyle and a way of exercising power” (Torres Cofiño, 2017) or “[PRI] governors that in their heyday symbolized the rebirth of the PRI party [...] five months before the [2018] presidential elections, illustrate its decay” (Ferri, 2018), show that belonging to the PRI helped voters make sense of the accusations and arrests. Importantly, these association of the PRI party to its corrupt governors also extended to its presidential 2018 candidate José Antonio Meade, even when he was never accused of corruption: “[t]he Achilles heel of the PRI and its [presidential] candidate is corruption” (Zuckermann, 2018). Thus, at least in public media, criminal prosecutions of governors were not taken to be cases of individual malfeasance being uncovered, and instead they were depicted as cases that showed institutional-level practices, particularly of partisan (PRI) nature.

In the terms of the argument presented here, two clarifications are in order. First, the veracity or logical soundness of the claim that corruption was indeed enabled by partisan networks is not important for the mechanism I propose. Instead, it is crucial for the public discourse surrounding the detentions of governors reproduced the idea that such detentions were instances of practices generalized in the PRI party. Second, my proposed argument goes beyond a “retrospective voting” claim. That is, my argument is not that governors ruled poorly and that triggers the punishment of the next gubernatorial candidate. Instead, I argue that because of improper and illegal behavior of governors while in office, voters might punish candidates of the same party that are running for different offices. Both of these clarifications are relevant because, as the next section will show, the association of criminal governors to the PRI in general directly impacted the electoral results of the PRI presidential candidate.

Before developing the second part of the claim set forth in this paper, one clarification is in order. This paper has focused primarily in the PRI governors that have been prosecuted. This is not to say that governors of other political parties are unimpeachable, nor that they are completely trustworthy. In fact, a 2017 survey reported the trustworthiness of political parties, and the numbers were abysmal: only 17.8 per cent of citizens trust in political parties, and that percentage is even lower in states like Mexico City (around 7%) or Oaxaca (11.8%) (INEGI, 2017). But as discussed above, the PRI’s particular institutional characteristics makes it a more likely

case to observe the specific mechanism. Given that an overwhelming proportion of prosecuted governors are from this party (only one non-PRI governor, PAN's Guillermo Padrés was arrested during this period versus seven PRI governors), the PRI party is more frequently associated with criminal governors, although Padrés' case also invokes ideas of networks of corruption.⁹

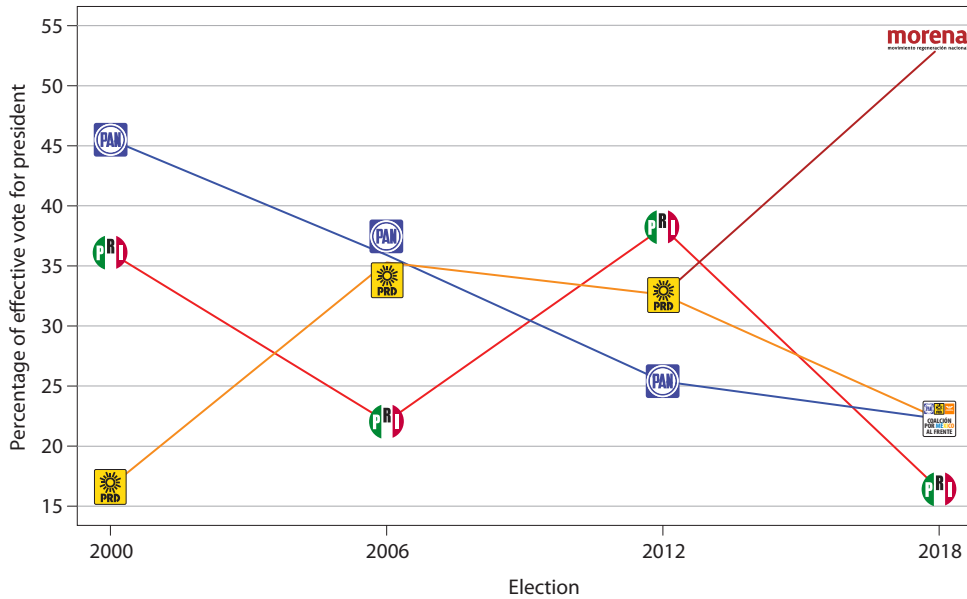
HOW ARRESTS (AND THE PRI) AFFECTED ITS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

The previous section argued that recent arrests and prosecution of local executives were used in the media not only as cases or examples of corrupt individuals, but as cases where institutions and political networks, particularly the PRI party, enabled criminal behavior of public servants. I begin this section by proposing an observable implication of the existence of the mechanism set forth in this paper. If indeed the PRI had suffered a reputational loss due to its governors' criminal prosecution, this loss would not necessarily affect all voters equally, because not all voters pay equal attention to political scandals and the discourses surrounding them. Plausibly, voters in states with a criminal governor would have been exposed to public media reproducing these discourses at a higher rate than voters in states with no criminal governors. This is so because voters are more likely to be interested, or at least exposed, to news and op-eds regarding their own governor than other governors. Furthermore, it is also plausible that citizens ruled by a governor who turned out to be corrupt would have suffered the consequences of such actions directly, making the acceptance of the corruption-as-network discourse more likely (Ang, 2019). Therefore, an observable implication of the mechanism proposed here is that voters in states with a criminal governor should be more prone to the depiction of the PRI as an enabler of the grand corruption schemes suffered in their states, and therefore would be the ones that would be more likely to punish the PRI for the malfeasance of its members.

Comparing electoral results across time would not quite provide convincing evidence towards the argument presented here. Showing that there was a decrease in votes cast for the PRI across the years would be insufficient as there are plenty of factors that change from one election to the next. Figure 1, which shows the presidential electoral results of all major parties for presidential candidates since 2000, illustrates the shortcoming of simply comparing across time: the figure shows a steep decrease in the percentage of votes cast for the PRI between 2012 and 2018, a decrease that is comparable to the one suffered between 2000 and 2006. Yet the corruption cases between these two sets of elections are not equal, nor are the char-

⁹ For example, see García (2016). Some institutional characteristics suggest that prosecutions among PRI politicians would be more likely to trigger the mechanism set forth here than the PAN prosecutions. For example, whereas the PRI candidate is designated by its leadership, the PAN decides its candidate by holding internal elections.

FIGURE 1. Presidential electoral results (2000-2018)



Source: Own using electoral results reported by INE. *Note:* The figure shows the main political parties in Mexico. PRD and the PAN formed a coalition and presented a single candidate in the 2018 election. The party Morena was founded after the 2012 elections, but the candidate that competed in 2018, winner Andrés Manuel López Obrador, had already competed as candidate of the PRD in 2006 and 2012.

acteristics of these elections. Thus, in order to show that the electoral results of 2018 were indeed affected by these corruption scandals, my analysis must show that the latest electoral result is a consequence of the corruption scandal and not due to other reasons, like the quality of the presidential candidate or the opposition.

I propose instead to present a research design that exploits both the geographical and temporal variation of corruption prosecution in explaining the presidential vote received by the PRI presidential candidates.¹⁰ I do so in two distinct, but complementary, steps. The next subsections explain each of these analysis in depth.

D-i-D estimates of PRI electoral loss

I begin by presenting a difference-in-difference design (Lechner, 2011), which compares a set of units at two points in time, some of which will have experienced a treatment between time 1 and time 2. By comparing how the outcome of interest changed across time among treated units to the change across time among untreat-

¹⁰ I choose to focus on presidential candidates only so as to minimize potential confounders when it comes to quality of candidates. Furthermore, as was discussed in the previous section, José Antonio Meade was clearly identified as a person suffering from the party’s corrupt reputation, but he was not accused of corruption himself.

ed units, we can identify an effect of the treatment in the outcome. For this first set of estimations, the outcome of interest is the votes received by the PRI presidential candidates in 2012 and 2018 in each of the electoral districts. Districts in states with PRI governors involved in a criminal corruption are considered units that have received treatment, and they are compared to the districts with no criminal PRI governors. In this way, the hypothesis derived from the discussion above can be re-written to state that the difference in PRI votes in districts of PRI criminal governors *versus* districts of non-criminal PRI governors will be *larger* in 2018 than the difference in PRI votes between these two groups of districts in 2012. I operationalize the outcome of interest using the variable, *PRI vote*, which reports the ballots issued solely for the PRI party in a given electoral district as a proportion of the effective votes in that district.

The relevant independent variable, or treatment, is whether the governor of a state was involved in a criminal corruption case between 2012 and 2018. Out of the 32 federal entities, I identified 74 governors who had been in power during or after the 2012 election. Since governors in Mexico can only be criminally prosecuted after a political trial,¹¹ or once they have left their office, I removed those who were still in office during the 2018 elections. Out of the 46 governors in this list, I identified seven *priistas* in six states that had been arrested or issued an arrest warrant due to involvement in corrupt activities.¹² Formally, we can write the empirical strategy in model form:

$$\begin{aligned} PRI\ vote_{d,s,y} = & \mu_{d,s} + \gamma * criminal_PRI_s + \delta * Y_2018 + \\ & + \tau * criminal_PRI_s * Y_2018 + \\ & + \Sigma\beta * X_{d,s,y} + \varepsilon_{d,s,y} \end{aligned}$$

Where the main dependent variable, or outcome of interest (*PRI vote*_{*d,s,y*}) is the proportion of votes cast in favor of the presidential PRI candidate in each electoral district (*d*) in state *s*, at time *t* (either 2012 or 2018). The first set of estimators, $\mu_{d,s}$ are district-specific intercepts, which capture the average support received by the PRI in each district.¹³ The variable *criminal_PRI_s* is an indicator variable that takes the value of 1 if at least one governor of state *s* was from the PRI and involved in a criminal proceeding at some point between 2012 and 2018, and 0 otherwise. Variable *Y_2018* also stands for an indicator that takes the value of 1 if the election observed

¹¹ Although legally possible, no governor in modern Mexico has ever been prosecuted after being stripped from immunity through a political trial (*juicio de desafuero*).

¹² The identified governors are César Duarte (Chihuahua), Jesús Reyna (Michoacán), Rodrigo Medina (Nuevo León), Beto Borge (Quintana Roo, still at large), Andrés Granier (Tabasco), and Javier Duarte and Flavino Ríos (Veracruz).

¹³ Since districts are perfectly nested within states, adding state's specific intercepts would only aggregate average district votes per state. However, table A3 in the Appendix presents the same set of estimators but adding state-specific intercepts, and the substantive results remain unchanged.

is on 2018, and 0 if it is 2012. Thus, the coefficient δ will capture the average difference on votes received by the PRI presidential candidates across all districts from the election in 2012 to the election of 2018.

The estimator τ is the main estimator of interest, as it is associated to the interaction between the geographic variation, *criminal_PRI_s*, and the time variation, *Y_2018*. This interaction will take the value of 1 if the observed district is in a state with a corrupt governor after the governor was involved in a criminal proceeding, and 0 otherwise. Following the discussion above, I expect τ to be negative and statistically distinguishable from 0 because the association of a corrupt governor to a corrupt party should be higher in states where the governor was involved in a criminal corruption case.

The final term *X_{d,s,y}* captures a number of control variables. First, and most importantly, since not all corrupt governors end up being prosecuted, or investigated even, it could be that the variable *criminal_PRI_s* by itself is not only measuring criminal corruption, but rather of corruption itself. If this were true, the estimator of interest (τ) could be “picking up” the effects of corrupt, or even very corrupt governors. I address this by adding a variable that captures a given governor’s involvement in a corruption scandal between 2012 and 2018 (*scandal_PRI_s*). For each PRI governor, I conducted a search of whether he or she had been accused of corruption, and marked 1 when I found evidence of accusations.¹⁴

I also include two measures of political performance: *economic_growth_s* and *homicides_s*. The first variable reports the average economic growth in the state the year before the election. Such variable accounts for the possibility that governors that perform poorly might be simultaneously more prone to prosecution and less capable of bringing in votes. The second variable, *homicides_s* is a crucial possible confounder particularly in the case of Mexico, where drug-related violence has increased everywhere, but not at the same rate. In particular, organized crime in Mexico is so closely related to politicians that scholars agree that sometimes it is hard to disentangle structures of drug trafficking and structures of the State (Bataillon, 2015; Illades, 2015). Thus, it could be that governors that allow organized crime to operate freely are both more likely to be arrested and to lose support from voters. I account for this possibility by controlling for the *homicides* per 100 000 people committed in the state in the calendar year before the election. The final model also includes the population in each district (logged), and *Access to Internet* as covariates.

¹⁴ Almost all governors have, at one point or another, been accused of corruption. To tease out the “quality” of these accusations, I only coded as one the accusations that were either picked up by three or more national newspapers, reports of the governors being investigated for malfeasance, or accusations that were tied to specific governmental programs. In the 32 states, 15 had been governed by executives that had been involved in a scandal as defined here, including the 6 states that had governors who were formally charged. The variable *Criminal*, then, measures the additional effect of being involved in a judicial process when you have also been involved in a scandal.

This latter variable is included because it could be that citizens in states that have more access to information would be both more likely to find and denounce criminal actions of their governors, and less likely to vote for the PRI.

Before presenting the estimations, I discuss a crucial assumption, often referred to as no spillover effects, that underpin the causal inference in the difference-in-difference approach. This assumption is necessary for τ to be an unbiased estimate of the effect of criminal trials in electoral outcome. Of course, it is hard to argue that this assumption holds in the data used: after all, criminal governors made national news, and it is more than likely that voters nation-wide followed these cases. However, any spillover would decrease the difference between treated and non-treated districts, biasing τ towards 0. Thus, the spillover effects would make it even harder to find an effect of criminal governors in districts that received the treatment *even when there is one*. Therefore, the estimations that I present here can be seen as a floor or minimum effect. Since the purpose of this statistical analysis is to present evidence towards the observable implication of my argument, and not to provide an exact point estimate of the effects, violation of the spillover assumption will not irreversibly damage for my argument.

Table 1 presents the results of the estimation of interest. The first line reported stands for the average difference in votes for the presidential candidate in districts with *criminal_PRI* governors in 2012, that is, before they were prosecuted, and the second row reports a similar comparison, but among politicians that were involved in a scandal. It is important to note that all *criminal_PRI* governors were involved in a *scandal_PRI*, so the overall comparison should include these two coefficients. In short, *criminal_PRI* is only statistically significant when including governors involved in a scandal (models 2, 4, and 5). Overall, what these two estimations jointly suggest is that scandalous governors that were not prosecuted drew an average of 5 per cent more effective votes for the PRI candidate Enrique Peña Nieto, the candidate that would ultimately win the 2012 elections. The candidates that were involved in a prosecution also brought more votes than non-scandalous governors for Peña Nieto, but less than those PRI governors accused of corruption but that were not prosecuted.

The third row, *Y_2018*, shows that the PRI presidential candidate lost, per district, an average of 16 per cent of the effective votes between the 2012 and the 2018 elections (statistically significant across all specifications). In perspective, the electoral margin nation-wide between the 2018 winner, Morena's candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador and PRI candidate José Antonio Meade was 36.8 per cent. Thus, this 16 per cent loss would have not changed the winner, but it could have placed the PRI in second place, as the PAN candidate Ricardo Anaya obtained 22.3 per cent of the votes (compared to the 16.4 per cent obtained by Meade). Of course, this loss can likely be attributed to a number of factors that changed between 2012 and 2018. For example, it could be that this loss is due to differences in the quality

TABLE 1. Change in votes for PRI (districts governed or not by a prosecuted governor)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
<i>Criminal_PRI</i>	-0.002 (0.008)	-0.039*** (0.009)	-0.001 (0.008)	-0.040*** (0.009)	-0.039*** (0.009)
<i>Scandal_PRI</i>		0.054*** (0.007)		0.056*** (0.007)	0.055*** (0.007)
<i>Y_2018</i>	-0.140*** (0.004)	-0.139*** (0.005)	-0.140*** (0.004)	-0.139*** (0.005)	-0.142*** (0.005)
<i>Criminal_PRI*Y_2018</i>	-0.027*** (0.008)	-0.025*** (0.010)	-0.028*** (0.008)	-0.026*** (0.010)	-0.027*** (0.010)
<i>Scandal_PRI*Y_2018</i>		-0.002 (0.008)		-0.003 (0.008)	-0.002 (0.008)
<i>Access to Internet</i>	-0.139*** (0.017)	-0.147*** (0.015)	-0.138*** (0.017)	-0.145*** (0.015)	-0.142*** (0.015)
<i>Economic growth</i>			-0.003 (0.003)	-0.006** (0.003)	-0.007** (0.003)
<i>Homicides per 100000</i>			0.00003 (0.0003)	0.0003 (0.0003)	0.0003 (0.0003)
<i>Log(population)</i>					0.026* (0.015)
<i>Constant</i>	0.328*** (0.005)	0.312*** (0.005)	0.330*** (0.006)	0.313*** (0.006)	-0.022 (0.194)
District intercepts	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	600	600	600	600	600

Source: Own elaboration. See Appendix for data sources. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

of the PRI presidential candidates, or to the differences in the candidates presented by the opposition. Another possibility, one that is directly related to the topic of criminal governors, is that at least part of this effect is being driven by the corruption scandals. That is, as discussed in section 3, corruption scandals made national headlines, and some of them were so well-known that they shaped the media depiction of the PRI. Of course, since this coefficient is capturing the difference between 2012 and 2018, it cannot be solely attributed to governors: after all, PRI president Peña Nieto was also involved in a well-known corruption case, which could also be impacting votes for PRI across the country.

The main coefficient of interest is reported in the fourth row. This estimation is associated with an indicator variable that takes the value of 1 if the electoral district is in a state with a criminal governor after the governor was arrested or issued an arrest warrant. As explained above, we expect this coefficient to be negative and sta-

tistically significant because we would expect the criminal malfeasance to inflict more electoral damage in places that directly experienced that malfeasance. Put differently, these are the districts where we would expect a higher loss of electoral support for PRI because voters in these districts were more exposed to the discourse of PRI institutionalized corruption. The estimations show a statistically significant and negative, albeit somewhat small (around 2.5 per cent), effect of criminal governors in votes for the PRI.

Importantly, this effect is robust to the inclusion of the control variable *scandal_PRI*, included as treatment effects in models 2, 4, and 5. Taken together, these models show that the electoral weakening of the PRI in states with criminal governors is not only attributed to the corruption itself, but its criminalization. Furthermore, models 2, 4 and 5 show no evidence to suggest that scandalous governors cost more electorally to the PRI than non-scandalous governors: in both of these models I find no statistically significant difference between these two groups. Of course, this lack of effect could also be due to the sample size. Nevertheless, the inclusion of this variable enables me to show that prosecution of governors affects vote choice distinctly than just corrupt governors.

The estimation (model 5) shows that the population of a district is statistically significant and positive, suggesting that more populated districts voted more frequently for the PRI on average. Finally, the two variables that measured the gubernatorial performance, *Economic growth* and *Homicides per 100 000* show some interesting results. On the one hand, *Economic growth* is both negative and statistically significant, suggesting that indeed governors that performed poorly received less votes, on average, for the PRI. Interestingly, however, violence in a state is not statistically associated with the votes received by the PRI candidate, a finding that is interesting in light of existing literature linking electoral behavior and violence.¹⁵

Table 1 also included, for all specifications, the variable *Access to Internet*. This covariate was included as a way to control the possible confounder that states with more informed citizens are states are both more likely to prosecute governors for malfeasance as well as less likely to vote for the PRI candidate. If this were the case, then adding this control variable would affect our main findings and the coefficient of interest would disappear. Yet, the main result of interest is quite robust to the inclusion of the covariates. Furthermore, the coefficient associated to *Access to Internet* is negative and statistically significant across all models, which suggests that more informed districts indeed cast less votes for the PRI. Of course, we must be cautious not to overinterpret this particular coefficient as it is merely added as a control variable in these estimations.

¹⁵ Although most of this literature has addressed the issue of violence and political participation and not necessarily vote choice (Ley, 2018; Trelles and Carreras, 2012).

Cross-sectional estimation of vote for PRI

I complement the evidence presented above with a cross-sectional estimation of votes for José Antonio Meade in 2018, explained as a function of *Access to Internet*. The logic behind this second set of estimations is as follows: if indeed the discourse of PRI prosecutions as evidence of institutional corruption affects vote choice because voters are more exposed to it, then voters who have more access to internet should be less likely to cast a vote for the PRI presidential candidate. Again, given the lack of individual-level data on vote choice, I rely on aggregate district-level results, and use the variable *Access to Internet* which reports the percentage of houses with internet at the district level (INEGI, 2015). The estimated model can be formalized as follows:¹⁶

$$\begin{aligned} PRI\ vote_{d,s} = & \mu'_s + \gamma' * criminal_PRI_s + \delta' * Internet\ Access_{d,s} + \\ & + \tau' * criminal_PRI_s * Internet\ Access_{d,s} + \\ & + \Sigma\beta' * X_{d,s} + \varepsilon'_{d,s} \end{aligned}$$

Where the PRI vote in a given district in the year 2018 is a function of whether the state had a governor that ended up being prosecuted (coefficient γ'), and the proportion of households that have access to internet (coefficient δ'). According to the previous discussion, this last estimate should be negative and statistically significant: voters in districts where internet access is higher, I argue, will be more exposed to the news of malfeasance as well as the idea that such malfeasance is evidence of larger corruption networks. In addition, models 3 through 4 add an interaction effect between these two variables. The coefficient τ' associated to this interaction effect measures the additional effect of internet access in the states whose governors were prosecuted for malfeasance.

I include a similar set of control variables to account for possible confounders. First, I add the variable *Scandal_PRI* which, as discussed, might be the driver behind the overall loss of votes for PRI, as opposed to the criminalization of corruption. I also include performance covariates (*Economic growth* and *Homicides per 100000*) to account for the possibility that corrupt governors are bad at governing and more likely to get caught for mismanagement. Finally, models 3 and 4 include the variable *Phone Access*, which measures the proportion of households that have landlines. This variable is included as a way to account for the possibility that the coefficient of interest, δ' is capturing not only the effect of higher access to public media, but also of voters with higher income. Put differently, it could be the case that districts with higher internet access are also districts with wealthier citizens, which have distinct

¹⁶ Note that the analysis of this implication does not require comparison across time, as is the case with the previous analysis. There is no reason to think that the decrease in votes should be more contingent upon internet coverage in 2018 than the decrease in votes in 2012.

TABLE 2. Votes for PRI in 2018 (districts with varying access to internet)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Criminal_PRI</i>	-0.031* (0.018)	-0.027 (0.021)	-0.028 (0.021)	-0.063*** (0.020)
<i>Scandal_PRI</i>				0.054*** (0.014)
<i>Internet access</i>	-0.138*** (0.013)	-0.136*** (0.015)	-0.127*** (0.036)	-0.126*** (0.035)
<i>Internet Access*Criminal_PRI</i>		-0.011 (0.032)	-0.011 (0.032)	-0.008 (0.032)
<i>Economic growth</i>	0.007 (0.009)	0.007 (0.009)	0.007 (0.009)	0.012 (0.008)
<i>Homicides per 100000</i>	-0.001* (0.001)	-0.001* (0.001)	-0.001* (0.001)	-0.001* (0.001)
<i>Phone access</i>			-0.010 (0.035)	-0.011 (0.034)
<i>Constant</i>	0.199*** (0.014)	0.199*** (0.014)	0.199*** (0.014)	0.177*** (0.013)
State intercepts	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	300	300	300	300

Source: Own elaboration. See Appendix for data sources. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

voting patterns. Since information on median income or socioeconomic status is not readily available at the district-level, I opt to proxy it using *Phone Access*, a measure that should be correlated with socioeconomic characteristics but is not a direct determinant of exposure to media and discourses.

The first line in Table 2 reports the average difference in votes obtained in states with a criminal governor *versus* those with no criminal governor. The table shows that all average estimations are negative, which is to be expected, but they are only statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) in model 4, where we include the variable *Scandal_PRI*. This means that in three out of the four models, we cannot reject the hypothesis that voters governed with a prosecuted PRI governor voted less, on average, than voters who were not governed by a prosecuted PRI governor. Although this is a surprising result, it bears noting that this analysis contains a relatively low number of observations (only 300), which would make it harder to find small effects. The fact that all estimates are negative suggest that this could be the case.

Importantly, however, the third line displays the coefficients associated with *Internet Access*, which are the main coefficients of interest. As can be seen, these results support the existence of the mechanism proposed: in all estimations, higher internet access is associated with lower votes for the PRI. This result is quite

similar across specifications: around 0.12 per cent average less votes for PRI when comparing districts where no houses have internet access to all households having internet access. Importantly, this result is robust to the inclusion of the variable *Phone Access* (model 4), which can be taken as evidence that the effect of *Internet Access* is not purely picking up socioeconomic characteristics of the electorate in each district.

Finally, the Table 2 shows that the coefficient associated with the interaction effect (τ) is consistently negative, which is in accordance to the mechanism discussed here, but it is not statistically significant in any of the models. This lack of results suggests that voters with more exposure to the discourses referenced above in states with criminal governors were not necessarily less likely to vote for the PRI when compared to voters with more exposure in states with no criminal governors. This absence of evidence should not be confused with evidence of absence. First, interaction effects necessitate higher number of observations to be able to be estimated.¹⁷ In addition, it could be that the variable *Internet Access* is not appropriately capturing the underlying concept of exposure to corruption scandals. Therefore, Table 2 does not provide evidence to support the mechanism explained above, at least when operationalized in this way.

Importantly, the results presented in Table 1 are robust to the inclusion of two additional possible confounders, as well as its estimation without the state of Veracruz. First, it could be that in states where the PRI performs really well electorally, governors feel more comfortable abusing public office *and* they are more likely to suffer bigger losses. To test if this is the case, model 3 of Table A2 in the includes the variable of *Past_Legislative_Vote_PRI*, which captures the PRI's electoral performance in the previous (legislative) federal election. This variable is not statistically significant, nor does it change the substantive results reported above. Second, the model 4 of Table A2 includes the variable *Proportion_Urban_Sections*, which captures the proportion of electoral sections that are in urban areas for each district. This variable is included to control for the possibility that governors in states with higher urbanization rates are more likely to suffer electoral consequences for their criminal behavior, and although the variable is indeed negative, it does not change the main results of interest. Finally, Table A4 in the Appendix reports the same set of estimations but removing Veracruz from the sample. I include these estimations because Duarte's case is paradigmatic in terms of the amount of funds embezzled, which could be driving the main findings. Again, I find no evidence that this is the case: even removing Veracruz from the sample I find that governors that were arrested indeed lower the votes obtained by their party in their states.

¹⁷ See Maas and Hox (2005) for sample sizes in multilevel modelling.

Votes for PRI and allies

Before offering some concluding remarks, I discuss some issues with the operationalization of the dependent variable, votes for the PRI. The Mexican electoral system allows citizens to mark several parties in the presidential ballot, as long as these parties are postulating the same candidate. The previous set of results were estimated using only the ballots that were marked for the PRI, thus getting rid of other votes that selected the PRI and other parties. The reason behind only looking at PRI votes is precisely that the mechanism I set forth here was PRI-specific. That is, there is no reason to think that parties that presented the same partisan candidate as the PRI also suffered electorally as a consequence of the gubernatorial prosecutions.

I take advantage of this feature, and present the same set of estimations than Table 1 using the variable *PRI+ vote*, a variable that reports the proportion of effective ballots that were marked for PRI and other parties of its electoral coalition.

TABLE 3. Change in votes for PRI and allies (districts governed or not by a prosecuted governor)

	Modelo 1	Modelo 2	Modelo 3	Modelo 4	Modelo 5
<i>Criminal_PRI</i>	-0.012 (0.008)	-0.056*** (0.009)	-0.012 (0.009)	-0.057*** (0.009)	-0.056*** (0.009)
<i>Scandal_PRI</i>		0.065*** (0.008)		0.068*** (0.008)	0.067*** (0.008)
<i>Y_2018</i>	-0.212*** (0.005)	-0.207*** (0.005)	-0.212*** (0.005)	-0.207*** (0.006)	-0.210*** (0.006)
<i>Criminal_PRI*Y_2018</i>	-0.019** (0.009)	-0.009 (0.011)	-0.020** (0.009)	-0.011 (0.011)	-0.012 (0.011)
<i>Scandal_PRI*Y_2018</i>		-0.014 (0.009)		-0.015* (0.009)	-0.014 (0.009)
<i>Access to Internet</i>	-0.142*** (0.018)	-0.149*** (0.016)	-0.141*** (0.018)	-0.146*** (0.016)	-0.143*** (0.016)
<i>Economic growth</i>			-0.003 (0.004)	-0.008** (0.003)	-0.008** (0.003)
<i>Homicides per 100000</i>			0.0001 (0.0003)	0.0003 (0.0003)	0.0003 (0.0003)
<i>Log(población)</i>					0.031* (0.016)
Constant	0.406*** (0.005)	0.387*** (0.005)	0.407*** (0.006)	0.388*** (0.006)	-0.010 (0.211)
State intercepts	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	600	600	600	600	600

Source: Own elaboration. See Appendix for data sources. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

tion.¹⁸ I take these estimations to be a plausibility probe of my mechanism: since there is no reason to think that other parties would suffer electoral losses as intensely as the PRI, we should not observe such a sudden change in electoral preferences that were expressed for these PRI allies.

The results presented in Table 3 supports my interpretation. The main coefficient of interest, associated to the interaction term *Criminal_PRI*Y_2018* is negative, but only statistically significant in models 1 and 3, none of which include the variable *Scandal_PRI*. Once we add this covariate, the effects disappear. This suggests, once again, that the mechanism by which voters electorally punished criminal corruption was, at least partly, via the PRI party. Based on these estimations, there is no reason to suggest that the parties that ran in alliance with the PRI suffered because of the latter's problematic governors. Thus, the reputational loss discussed in section 3 seems to have affected only the PRI.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This paper began with the assertion that the recent wave of detained governors had political consequences beyond those suffered by the individuals involved in those cases. Because of the prevalence and importance of these cases, public media reproduced depictions of these detentions as evidence not only of the malfeasance revealed, but also of networks of impunity. These networks were embodied by the PRI, the party that contributed the most to the pool of criminal governors. As a consequence, the PRI lost its appeal as a viable party, and this was reflected in its electoral results of 2018, where its candidate suffered a resounding loss.

This argument has important theoretical and political implications. Theoretically, this paper identifies an effect that corruption prosecution has on political parties. This effect contributes to the growing literature on the relationship between corruption and trust in political systems and institutions. Furthermore, it identifies the electoral implications of this effect: by associating corrupt governors with their parties, parties suffer electorally even in non-gubernatorial races (Ang, 2019).

Politically, the Mexican experience can inform us of potential ways of improving accountability of political parties beyond simply voting them out of office. After the reactions described here, where media and pundits blamed the PRI for the voraciousness of their governors, PRI militants and directives attempted to assuage the concerns raised by the corruption scandals and their ensuing prosecutions. Perhaps noting that electoral support for his campaign was dwindling, PRI presidential candidate José Antonio Meade attempted to address the corruption scandals head-on, and during a political rally in Veracruz claimed that “It hurts that Javier Duarte in-

¹⁸ See the Codebook for a list on parties of each election.

jured our prestige. It hurts because it does not define us, and it does not describe us. The *priismo* of Veracruz is not defined by corruption or impunity” (Gómez, 2018). Similar statements were made by PRI national leader Enrique Ochoa Reza, who attempted to convince voters that the PRI party was free of the “sins of corruption” after calling Duarte a “national embarrassment”.¹⁹ Attempts to distance the PRI from these governors continued even after the 2018 elections. A document allegedly written by a *priísta* group to the PRI leadership blamed the then president Peña Nieto and the “shameful generation” of politicians for the disastrous electoral results (*El Financiero*, 2018).

But the attempts to solve the crisis brought upon by the criminal governors went beyond vague statements. Notably, Javier Duarte and César Duarte were expelled from the PRI ranks when they escaped their arrests warrants, an extreme action considering that other governors involved in corruption scandals were never publicly rejected by PRI.²⁰ The willingness of the PRI to expel and publicly reject any association with criminally prosecuted governors marks a change from its previous treatment of corruption scandals. This suggests that the 2018 electoral PRI crisis fundamentally shaped what was considered acceptable within the PRI. This, in turn, opens up the possibility that voters, when punishing candidates for what their co-partisans did, are forcing parties to improve internal discipline and a better selection of politicians and candidates.

CONCLUSION


This paper aimed at understanding the consequences of the recent wave of corruption scandals for the PRI party, both in terms of its reputation as well as its 2018 electoral results. I argued that the criminal prosecutions were not merely understood as cases involving individuals, but rather as instances that evidenced networks and institutions that enabled criminal practices. Specifically, the networks evidences were often embodied in the PRI, the party that most frequently contributed to the pool of criminal governors.

This paper also showed that this association of criminal behavior with a specific institution, the PRI, affected the electoral results of candidates associated with such party. I argued that, if this association were indeed affecting the appeal of the PRI as a political option, the loss of votes should be greater in places where voters were more likely, on average, to have been exposed to public media that reproduced these associations. I argued that two groups of voters that would be more exposed

¹⁹ See *El Financiero* (2017). In 2016, the PRI also expelled Tomás Yarrington, former governor of Tabasco, and suspended Roberto Borge, former governor of Quintana Roo.

²⁰ For example, Mario Marín, the Puebla governor who was accused of torturing a journalist as retaliation for an investigation involving a child abuse ring was never expelled from the PRI.

would be (1) those in states that had a prosecuted governor, and (2) those who had greater internet access. The evidence presented here shows that indeed districts in states with governors that were prosecuted lost more votes for the PRI from 2012 to 2018 than districts in states with no prosecuted governors. This effect, although small, is consistent with the implications of my argument. Similarly, I found that districts higher proportion of households with internet access were indeed associated with less votes for PRI, even after including *Phone Access* as a way to control for possible socioeconomic lurking variables.

I finalized this paper by arguing that these dynamics are somewhat promising for the possibility of strengthening partisan accountability and responsiveness to the voters. The findings presented here, I argue, are a somewhat hopeful interpretation of the electoral effects of criminalizing corruption. Particularly, it is worth noting that if politicians and entire political parties realize that they pay the consequences of what members in their group do, they might be incentivized to monitor and punish corruption within their ranks. Should this trend continue, Mexico's prospects of developing a responsive party system that can be held accountable might not seem so elusive. 

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APPENDIX

Codebook

For every state, I identified the governors that were in power on June 30th of 2012, and left power before June 30th 2018.

- *vote_PRI*: Proportion of votes cast only in favor of the PRI, as a proportion of effective number of votes.
- *vote_PRI_allies*: Proportion of votes cast in favor of the PRI and parties that endorsed the PRI candidate, as a proportion of effective number of votes. In 2012, these are votes for PRI and PVEM. In 20128, these are votes for PRI, PVEM and NA.
- *criminal_PRI*: 1 if at least one of the governors associated with that state was arrested and s/he was from the PRI
- *scandal_PRI*: 1 if at least one of the governors associated with that state was from the PRI reported to be either investigated by corruption, or accused for corruption in the media with evidence or for a specific program of government.
- *y_2018*: 1 if electoral year is 2018, 0 if 2012.
- *Internet Access*: Proportion of households in district with access to Internet
- *Population (logged)*: Population per district, logged.
- *Economic growth*: Average quarterly economic growth in the year before the election.
- *Homicides per 100 000*: Homicide count in the six months prior to the elections (January to June). Source for 2012: INEGI, Source for 2018: Semáforo delictivo.
- *Telephone Access*: Proportion of households in district with landlines

Summary statistics

TABLE A1. Descriptive statistics

	Min.	1stQ.	Med.	Mean	3rdQ.	Max.	Obs.
Vote PRI	0.04	0.13	0.20	0.22	0.30	0.55	600
Vote PRI+	0.05	0.14	0.24	0.26	0.38	0.63	600
Y_2018	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.50	1.00	1.00	600
<i>Criminal_PRI</i>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.21	0.00	1.00	600
<i>Scandal_PRI</i>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.47	1.00	1.00	600
Internet Access	0.01	0.13	0.25	0.27	0.38	0.82	600
Population (log)	12.34	12.79	12.87	12.86	12.94	13.54	600
GDP growth	-2.16	0.51	0.76	0.74	1.13	3.14	600
Homicides	0.91	5.42	7.59	10.55	13.02	43.02	600
Phone Access	0.02	0.25	0.38	0.40	0.54	0.87	600

Source: Own elaboration.

Alternative estimations

TABLE A2. Votes for PRI (additional controls)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Criminal_PRI</i>	-0.039*** (0.009)	-0.040*** (0.009)	-0.039*** (0.009)	-0.047*** (0.008)
<i>Scandal_PRI</i>	0.053*** (0.007)	0.055*** (0.007)	0.055*** (0.007)	0.063*** (0.007)
Y_2018	-0.140*** (0.005)	-0.140*** (0.005)	-0.140*** (0.005)	-0.156*** (0.005)
<i>Criminal_PRI*Y_2018</i>	-0.026*** (0.010)	-0.027*** (0.010)	-0.027*** (0.010)	-0.024*** (0.009)
<i>Scandal_PRI*Y_2018</i>	-0.001 (0.008)	-0.002 (0.008)	-0.002 (0.008)	-0.003 (0.008)
Access to Internet	-0.145*** (0.015)	-0.144*** (0.015)	-0.144*** (0.015)	0.005 (0.024)
Economic growth		-0.006* (0.003)	-0.006* (0.003)	-0.005* (0.003)
Homicides per 100 000		0.0003 (0.0003)	0.0003 (0.0003)	0.0003 (0.0002)
<i>Past_Legislative_Vote_PRI</i>			0.016 (0.036)	
<i>Proportion_Urban_Sections</i>				-0.098*** (0.013)
Constant	0.313*** (0.005)	0.314*** (0.006)	0.313*** (0.006)	0.343*** (0.007)
District intercepts	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	586	586	586	586

Source: Own elaboration. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

TABLE A3. Votes for PRI presidential candidate (state intercepts)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Criminal_PRI</i>	-0.011 (0.019)	-0.046** (0.019)	-0.007 (0.019)	-0.045** (0.020)
<i>Scandal_PRI</i>		0.052*** (0.015)		0.059*** (0.016)
<i>Y_2018</i>	-0.157*** (0.004)	-0.156*** (0.005)	-0.154*** (0.005)	-0.150*** (0.006)
<i>Criminal_PRI*Y_2018</i>	-0.027*** (0.009)	-0.024** (0.011)	-0.033*** (0.010)	-0.026** (0.011)
<i>Scandal_PRI*Y_2018</i>		-0.004 (0.009)		-0.012 (0.010)
<i>Population (logged)</i>	0.007 (0.015)	0.007 (0.015)	0.007 (0.015)	0.006 (0.015)
Economic growth			-0.006 (0.004)	-0.008* (0.004)
Homicides per 100 000			-0.001 (0.0004)	-0.001* (0.0004)
Constant	0.213 (0.194)	0.197 (0.193)	0.225 (0.194)	0.217 (0.193)
State intercepts	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	600	600	600	600

Source: Own elaboration. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

TABLE A4. Votes for PRI presidential candidate (without Veracruz)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Criminal_PRI</i>	0.012 (0.010)	-0.023** (0.011)	0.016 (0.010)	-0.023** (0.011)
<i>Scandal_PRI</i>		0.052*** (0.008)		0.057*** (0.008)
<i>Y_2018</i>	-0.159*** (0.004)	-0.158*** (0.005)	-0.158*** (0.004)	-0.155*** (0.005)
<i>Criminal_PRI*Y_2018</i>	-0.034*** (0.009)	-0.032*** (0.010)	-0.040*** (0.009)	-0.035*** (0.010)
<i>Scandal_PRI*Y_2018</i>		-0.003 (0.008)		-0.008 (0.008)
<i>Population (logged)</i>	0.047*** (0.016)	0.040** (0.016)	0.047*** (0.016)	0.042*** (0.016)
Economic growth			-0.006* (0.003)	-0.009*** (0.003)
Homicides per 100 000			-0.0003 (0.0003)	-0.0002 (0.0003)
Constant	-0.299 (0.211)	-0.237 (0.206)	-0.303 (0.211)	-0.245 (0.205)
District intercepts	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	559	559	559	559

Source: Own elaboration. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

TABLE A5. Votes for PRI presidential candidate (PRI governors only)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Criminal_PRI</i>	-0.041*** (0.010)	-0.046*** (0.010)	-0.047*** (0.010)	-0.050*** (0.010)
<i>Scandal_PRI</i>		0.020 (0.013)		0.013 (0.013)
<i>Y_2018</i>	-0.161*** (0.005)	-0.164*** (0.011)	-0.159*** (0.005)	-0.164*** (0.011)
<i>Criminal_PRI*Y_2018</i>	-0.018* (0.009)	-0.018* (0.009)	-0.012 (0.009)	-0.014 (0.010)
<i>Scandal_PRI*Y_2018</i>		0.003 (0.012)		0.006 (0.012)
<i>Population (logged)</i>	0.030 (0.019)	0.031 (0.019)	0.031 (0.019)	0.032 (0.019)
Economic growth			0.013*** (0.005)	0.012** (0.005)
Homicides per 100 000			0.0004 (0.0004)	0.0003 (0.0004)
Constant	-0.050 (0.250)	-0.085 (0.251)	-0.081 (0.250)	-0.099 (0.250)
District intercepts	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	303	303	303	303

Source: Own elaboration. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

The Nationalization of Mexican Parties

Paul Johnson and Francisco Cantú*

ABSTRACT: This article evaluates the nationalization of Mexican parties during the 1994–2018 period. To do so, we use data from the last nine federal elections in the country and apply two alternative measurements of party nationalization. First, we estimate the levels of static and dynamic nationalization among Mexico’s major parties. Second, we analyze the importance of national, state, and district factors in order to explain the variance of the parties’ electoral support. The overall results show that PRI has been the most nationalized party since 1994, while PAN and PRD show regionalized patterns of support but with uniform fluctuations over time. The findings also portray Morena as a highly nationalized party, and that both PRI and PAN continue to rely on their national strength during elections.

KEYWORDS: Mexico, party nationalization, voting behavior.

La nacionalización de los partidos mexicanos

RESUMEN: Este artículo evalúa la nacionalización de los partidos mexicanos durante el periodo de 1994–2018. Para hacerlo, utilizamos datos de las últimas nueve elecciones federales del país y aplicamos dos medidas alternativas de nacionalización de partidos. Primero, estimamos los niveles de nacionalización estática y dinámica entre los principales partidos de México. Segundo, analizamos la importancia de los factores nacionales, estatales y distritales para explicar la variación del apoyo electoral de los partidos. Los resultados muestran que el PRI ha sido el partido más nacionalizado desde 1994, mientras que el PAN y el PRD muestran patrones de apoyo regionalizados, pero con fluctuaciones uniformes a lo largo del tiempo. Los hallazgos también retratan a Morena como un partido altamente nacionalizado, y que tanto el PRI como el PAN continúan dependiendo de su fuerza nacional durante las elecciones.

PALABRAS CLAVE: México, nacionalización de partidos, comportamiento de los votantes.

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During the last thirty years, electoral competition in Mexico has centered on three main parties: the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the National Action Party (PAN), and the Democratic Revolution Party (PRD). The consistency of their voting patterns over time have led to the Mexican party system becoming one of the most institutionalized party systems in Latin America (Mainwaring, 2018). Party competition has typically focused on the PRI competing with either the PAN or PRD in different parts of the country (Klesner, 2005). This portrays the PRI as a strongly nationalized party, and the PRD and PAN as regionally focused parties with consolidated support bases in different parts of the country.

However, in 2018, the National Regeneration Movement (Morena) upset this dynamic after winning the presidency and claiming majorities in both legislative houses. Moreover, as Garrido and Freidenberg show in this volume, Morena led the vote in all but one state in the country. A first impression would be that the 2018 election diluted the regional vote patterns observed for the two previous presidential elections (Klesner, 2007; Camp, 2013). But how strong were these regional voting patterns in first place?

This paper analyzes the patterns of electoral support over time for the four most important parties in the country. We evaluate whether party politics is more nationally or regionally focused in Mexico, and how Morena fits into this system. Rather than predict how the party nationalization of Mexican parties will change in the future, we take the 2018 election as an inflection point to look back and get a perspective of the patterns of electoral support during the last 25 years. Our analysis explores the national, state, and district components that explain the variance of vote returns for the parties. We aim to fill a gap in the literature of Mexican politics by focusing on the patterns of nationalization across political parties. This approach follows a group of selected studies that go beyond an analysis of the party system level to understand the electoral support of the parties over time (Bartels, 1998; Lupu, 2015; Morgenstern, 2017; Mustillo, 2018).

Our work revisits the theory of comparative party nationalization, which would argue that countries with many districts, federal institutions and a presidential system are unlikely to have nationalized parties. We argue that such expectation can be moderated by the a centralized party organization. We also seek to explain the variance in levels of the party's vote shares over time, arguing that Mexican politics can be explained at a state- and national-level. Finally, we show that the first couple of elections for Morena received highly nationalized voting patterns, similar to what other parties have achieved in the past.

Our analysis first builds on Mustillo and Mustillo (2012) and Morgenstern (2017) to capture two different dimensions of parties' electoral support: the uniformity of the party's vote shares across districts (static nationalization) and their con-

sistency over time (dynamic nationalization). Both dimensions give us a better picture of the consistency of parties' territorial support. This approach demonstrates that the main Mexican parties show nationalized patterns of electoral support for most of the democratic period. The second part of the analysis unpacks the national, state, and district components of electoral support over time. We follow Stokes (1967) and Bartels's (1998) operationalization of party nationalization to compare Morena's patterns of support in the last election to those of the former largest parties in the country. The findings of this paper update and complement previous works on the nationalization of the party system in Mexico (Klesner, 2005; Lujambio, 2001; Baker, 2009; Harbers, 2017).

The article begins by reviewing the most important conceptualizations of party nationalization. It then provides a few expectations for the nationalization of the Mexican parties. The empirical section shows first the results for the 1997-2018 section and then focuses on the last two federal elections to include Morena in the analysis. The conclusion summarizes the findings and proposes potential ways to expand the research.

MEASURING PARTY NATIONALIZATION

The geographical distribution of a party's support determines the way regional and national interests play out in politics. A highly nationalized party system incentivizes parties to focus on country-focused policies (Caramani, 2004), particularly in the presence of similar cross-district constituencies (Crisp *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, it keeps parties more accountable for economic outcomes, allowing voters to follow a retrospective economic voting logic at the polls (Morgenstern *et al.*, 2017). Higher party nationalization also dilutes the incentives for targeted budget allocations and sub-national transfers, increasing the provision of public benefits at a national level (Lago-Peñas and Lago-Peñas, 2009; Hicken *et al.*, 2016; Castañeda-Angarita, 2013; Crisp *et al.*, 2013). Finally, in new democracies, where ethnic or religious tensions are also divided by territory, the nationalization of major parties is an important factor for democratic stability (Stepan, 2001; Reynolds, 1999).

Given the importance of party nationalization, scholars have sought to conceptualize the uniformity of voting behavior across subnational units (Schattschneider, 1960). Stokes (1967) operationalized this idea with a components-of-variance model, which segmented electoral returns into district, state, and national components. By doing so, Stokes was able to account for the many moving parts of national electoral support for any major party. Bartels (1998) adopted Stokes's idea and modeled the electoral support for a party in a given year as the sum of three distinct components: the standing loyalty for the party in a district, the electoral forces at work in a specific state, and the shifting tides of national electoral forces.

His approach, therefore, conceptualizes nationalization as the degree to which the national vote patterns explain the overall variance of the results for a party.

An alternative approach of accounting for the homogeneity of electoral support across districts uses the Gini coefficient (Caramani, 2000, 2004; Jones and Mainwaring, 2003), a measure of distribution often used to analyze levels of inequality. While dispersion measures are the standard approach to estimate the nationalization of parties and party systems, they only capture the vote distribution of a party at a given point in time. As a result, the Gini index fails to account for any temporal variation. Moreover, the measurement conflates other sources of variance in the data, such as those occurring within each district.

A third approach has been mined by Morgenstern (2017) and Mustillo and Mustillo (2012). The first author proposes a model similar to the one originally proposed by Stokes and deconstructs the district-level electoral results into three components: the distribution of the party's vote across districts, the volatility of the party's national vote, and the unexplained variance both in the districts and across time.¹

These authors also conceptualize two main dimensions of party nationalization. On the one hand, static nationalization considers the homogeneity of national trends that underpin elections that a party competes in. On the other hand, dynamic nationalization is the “local effect” resulting from characteristics that shape the differences between districts over time.

Building on the last approach, Mustillo and Mustillo (2012) propose a way to account for different sources of dynamic nationalization. To do so, they develop a multilevel model that defines the mean trajectory of the party's vote share and use their parameters to estimate the initial level of support for a party, its rate of change, and the dynamic variations of this support. This allows researchers to consider not just a single form of nationalization, but to conceptualize nationalization in terms of both the static and dynamic sources of variance, as well as electoral volatility.

Each of these approaches offers a different way to measure nationalization. The best approach depends on the question being asked and the conceptualization of nationalization being used. The dispersion measure approach is appropriate when comparing the variance in party support across districts at one point in time, but it only offers a snapshot of static nationalization and fails to account for wider dynamics. The components of variance approach, on the other hand, identifies the effect of national or local dynamics on vote share trends, but doesn't account for electoral volatility or static nationalization. Finally, the approach proposed by Mustillo and Mustillo (2012) accounts for the static and dynamic dimensions of nationalization, as well as electoral volatility. This methodology identifies a number of different kinds of variance at the same time, but will only describe the broad patterns over time.

¹ See also Morgenstern and Potthoff (2005).

This article will analyze the components of each party's national vote share, and the patterns of support that shape vote share trends in Mexico. In order to do so, it is appropriate to use two alternative approaches, first building on the Mustillo and Mustillo (2012) and Morgenstern (2017) empirical strategy, before following Stokes (1967) and Bartels's (1998) approach.

EXPECTATIONS FOR THE MEXICAN CONTEXT

The literature on electoral behavior in Mexico considers the regionalization of the partisan support as one of the most important determinants of vote choice (Domínguez and McCann, 1995; Moreno, 2003). A common description of the Mexican party system portrays the PRI competing with either the PAN in the west and northern states or the PRD in the Federal District, Michoacán, and the south of the country (Klesner, 2005, 2007). This creates a situation where PRI is far more spread out across the nation, and PRD and PAN are more focused in their respective regions.

We discuss below the institutional and party level factors that may explain the variance of vote trends across districts, and to what extent the disruption of Morena may affect the nationalization of the party system in Mexico. We organize our discussion describing first our expectations for the overall party system and then what we expect for each of the parties in the analysis.

At the party system-level, party nationalization faces at least three important institutional obstacles. The first has to do with the number of districts in the country. A large number of districts increases parties' strategies to allocate their campaign resources in those districts that they believe they have better opportunities to compete for a seat (Morgenstern, 2017). For the specific case of Mexico, the existence of 300 districts increases the opportunities for parties to concentrate their efforts at a regional level, producing scattered party strongholds in the country and reducing their expected static nationalization. Moreover, numerous and smaller districts will increase the heterogeneity across them, making it very difficult for parties to manage a uniform campaign in the country.

A second institutional roadblock for party nationalization in Mexico involves its presidential system. Morgenstern (2017) argues that nationalization should be lower in presidential cases because voters have different ballots to elect the executive and legislative. Such an opportunity allows congressional candidates to exploit their personal attributes rather than following a national campaign strategy. In contrast, parliamentary systems fuse executive and legislative elections, which leads voters to make choices based on nationally-focused platforms. We then expect that the presidential system decreases the dynamic nationalization of parties, as it leads to more voters making decisions based on local issues.

The final institutional factor hindering party nationalization has to do with its federalist structure. Mexico's sub-national political units have independent execu-

tives and legislatures. Such an institutional design, along with the cross-state diversity of economic development, social values, and political competition, creates incentives for national parties to split along state lines. Previous work has shown the role that governors play in influencing legislative behavior after the end of the hegemonic-party period (Cantú and Desposato, 2012; Rosas and Langston, 2011). As a result of this influence, state-level issues and events will be more powerful than those that occur at a district-level. Moreover, the visibility of gubernatorial candidates over their legislative counterparts produces substantive coattail effects, where congressional candidates would mimic the slogans and messages of candidates for governors (Magar, 2012). In fact, spatial analysis of the 2012 election in Mexico suggests that parties allocate resources and campaign efforts based on a state—rather than a district—logic, which is reflected in the correlation of the vote returns between nearby districts (Harbers, 2017).

On the other hand, the expected regionalization of Mexican parties should be moderated by two institutional factors: the centralization of financial resources within each party and the control of the ballot access. The first factor has to do with the financial dependence of state party chapters on the transfers from the National Executive Committee for their local organization and campaigns (Harbers, 2014). At the same time, national party leaders have great discretion on transferring these funds across states and districts. Such structure helps party elites to maintain control over local leaders and keep a national party's agenda (Kerevel, 2015).

The second way in which leaders mitigate the risks of extreme regionalization in the party is by controlling the access to the ballot access. In Mexico, national leaders are the ultimate veto player over the legislative candidates that appear on the ballot. Such control gives them important leverage on the way candidates and legislators behave (Nacif, 2002; Kerevel, 2015). By controlling ballot access, the national party organization can select the candidates that are more likely to follow the national party agenda in exchange for future positions within the party (Hagopian, 2007). This is consistent with the literature on legislative politics, which shows how legislators' loyalty towards the party leader increases with the control that the latter has on their election goals (Strøm, 1997; Pennings and Hazan, 2001).

At the party-level, we expect that the nationalization of each party is a function of its previous experience in government and their particular origins. We expect democratic governing experience to have a positive effect on both dimensions of nationalization. Experience in a national government expands the visibility of a party and provides incentives to broaden the scope of their campaign proposals to be nationally-focused (Morgenstern, 2017). We then expect that PRI and PAN's previous experience in the national government increased their opportunities for reaching a national electorate.

Similarly, party nationalization is a function of how each party was founded as well as their vote-earning strategies. We expect the PRI to be the most nationalized

of all Mexican parties, given its previous structure as a hegemonic party. One of the main changes to the party occurred during the early 1930s, when it went from being a confederation of regional parties to a hierarchical structure led by the national party leadership (Langston, 2017). This structure allowed the party to control and mobilize party members from the top down. Moreover, PRI's monopoly of power during most of the twentieth century gave it full control of the political resources at the federal, state, and local levels (Klesner, 2005). These characteristics have led to a party that operates as a national party.

In contrast, the origins of the PRD and PAN leave both parties with fewer incentives to be as nationalized as the PRI. The PRD was originally created as an umbrella party of former leftist parties and civic organizations. While all them united around the electoral campaign of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the electoral defeats left party members to deal with competing interests and struggle to maintain internal cohesion (Camp, 2014). This led to the party struggling to institutionalize, and relying on support that has been concentrated in a small base that is linked to the historical leaders of the party (Bruhn, 2012).

PAN, meanwhile, took a different path. Instead of trying to topple the PRI by beating the party to the presidency, the PAN started by building electoral support from the bottom up. Their strategy focused on targeting subnational offices and using these offices as a springboard to other victories. This path resulted in the gradual increase in support for the party, spreading geographically and horizontally (Lujambio, 2001; Lucardi, 2016). This strategy, however, has inevitably resulted in a party that is keenly interested in local politics. In addition, PAN's support base is primarily the urban, educated middle class. This base is concentrated in urban centers, especially the northern region of the country (Klesner, 2005).

Lastly, the early electoral success of Morena allowed it to strengthen the national aspect of its electoral support. Similar to the case of the PRD, Morena was built as an organization to support the presidential candidacy of a charismatic leader. Nevertheless, López Obrador's overwhelming national popularity received a similar electoral support across regions, vanishing the regional patterns of the presidential vote observed in previous elections (Baker, 2009). As a result, we expect Morena to score highly on its national patterns of support.

In sum, the institutional context in the country should produce a moderately to strongly nationalized party system. We expect the PRI to be the most nationalized party, with corruption scandals which have led voters to punish the party in recent elections (Ang, 2020). The PAN and PRD should have a lower level of nationalization, as a result of their regionally-focused support bases, which will produce vote shares that are clustered at state-level. On the other hand, the centralized organization of parties should produce consistent fluctuations of electoral support over time. In Morena's case, the successful presidential campaign of its candidate produced

strong coattails on the legislative elections, providing electoral support for the party in most of the constituencies. As a result, we expect a high level of nationalization for Morena in 2018.

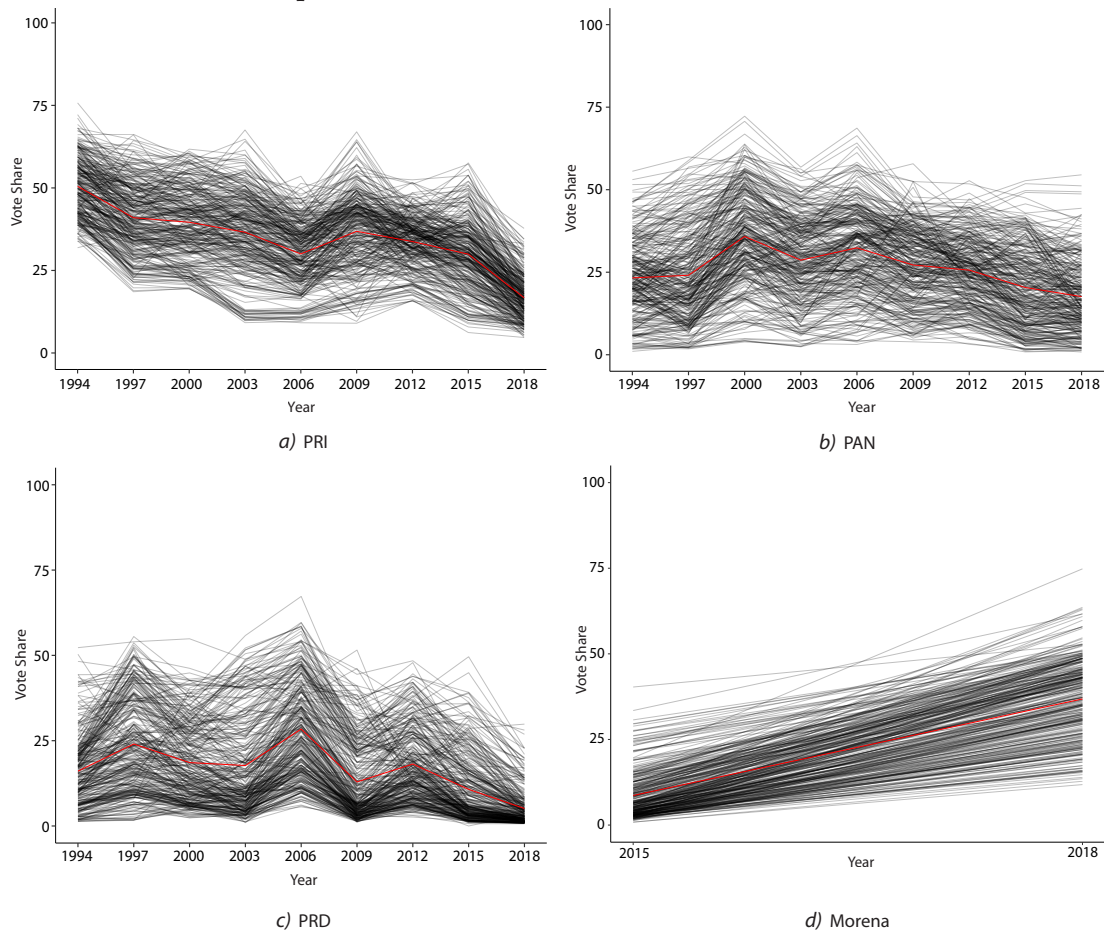
ANALYSIS

Our goal for this section is to estimate the levels of party nationalization in Mexico over the 1994-2018 period. We do so by looking at the variation of the vote trends across elections and districts for the four most important parties in the country: PRI, PAN, PRD and Morena. Our units of analysis are the 300 congressional districts in the country. We address any changes of district boundaries over time by grouping the precinct-level results according to the 2013 redistricting process. All the data comes from the official election results available at the National Electoral Institute's (INE) website.

Figure 1 plots the district-level vote shares during the 1994-2018 period for each party. Each gray line represents the party's vote share in a given district; and the thick, red line denotes the national vote share for the same party. Our discussion focuses on the two types of uniformity in the vote-share trends proposed by Morgenstern (2017): static and dynamic nationalization. Static nationalization is understood as the uniformity of the party's vote shares across districts at a given point in time. A high level of static nationalization means that the vote shares for a party have little variation across districts, so most of the lines in the plot should be very close to the red line. Meanwhile, dynamic nationalization captures the consistency of the district-level variations of the party's vote shares over time. A high level of dynamic nationalization expects uniform changes in district-level vote elections, producing fewer crossings among gray lines in the plot.

Morgenstern (2017) combines both dimensions to classify political parties into four categories: Nationalized parties (high static and high dynamic nationalization), unbalanced (low static, high dynamic), in-flux (high static, low dynamic), or nationalized (high static and high dynamic). Nationalized parties have very uniform support across districts and over time. Examples include Spain's Socialist Party (PSOE) or the Czech Republic's Social Democrats (CSSD). Unbalanced parties will experience high variance in vote shares across districts, but changes in their support over time tend to occur in uniform patterns. This category is the most common, and include the likes of the Labour Party and the Conservatives in the UK. In-flux parties are a rare category, where a party's even support across districts is not reflected over time. Finally, locally-focused parties a large variance of support across both districts and elections. Spain's Basque Nationalist Party or Argentina's Justicialist Party are examples of this category (Morgenstern, 2017).

The district-level vote shares in Plot 1a show that the PRI has the highest static nationalization in the country, as there are more lines falling closer to the party's

FIGURE 1. Vote shares per district

Source: Own elaboration with data from the INE website (www.ine.mx).

national mean than is observed for the PAN and PRD. Similarly, PRI's electoral support over time presents uniform fluctuations for most of the districts in the country. A notable exception is the set of lines at the bottom of the plot, which represent the district-level results in Mexico City. This set of outlier trends suggests that while the PRI obtains very similar results in all the districts in Mexico City, these vote returns are systematically lower than what the party gets elsewhere in the country.

The vote returns for the PAN, meanwhile, suggest the uneven electoral strength of the party across districts. While the party earns more than half of the votes in a few districts, it also obtains no more than 5 per cent in others. Such wide variance denotes the PAN's low static nationalization. On the other hand, the graph also shows uniform fluctuations across districts for the elections before 2006. Beginning that year, the lines present more convoluted patterns, suggesting a decline of PAN's dynamic nationalization in recent elections.

Similar to the PAN's case, the vote shares for the PRD in any given year show large variations across districts, initially spreading evenly between 0 and 50 per cent. However, the figure suggests that static nationalization increased in the recent three elections due to the decline of party support in the country, getting vote shares close to 0 per cent in most districts. On the other hand, dynamic nationalization seems to be very high, as changes in vote shares over time seem to move uniformly across districts.

We now narrow our focus to the vote nationalization trends for Morena by only considering the two federal elections after the creation of the party in 2013. While the lack of enough elections should warn the reader about the prematurity of the findings, Figure 1d highlights a few patterns that can be confirmed in forthcoming elections. While Morena's support was relatively low in 2015, and all its district-level vote shares increase by 2018. This increase, however, was not uniform, as the vote shares "fanned out". The vote shares for Morena in the districts of Guanajuato, Aguascalientes, and Yucatán increased by a lower rate than the national average. In contrast, districts in Chiapas, Hidalgo, and Tabasco reported vote shares from less than 10 per cent in 2015 to over 50 per cent in 2018. These results may suggest similar levels of static nationalization for Morena to those observed for PRI. On the other hand, we are still unable to elucidate the national dynamics of the party with only two elections for the analysis.

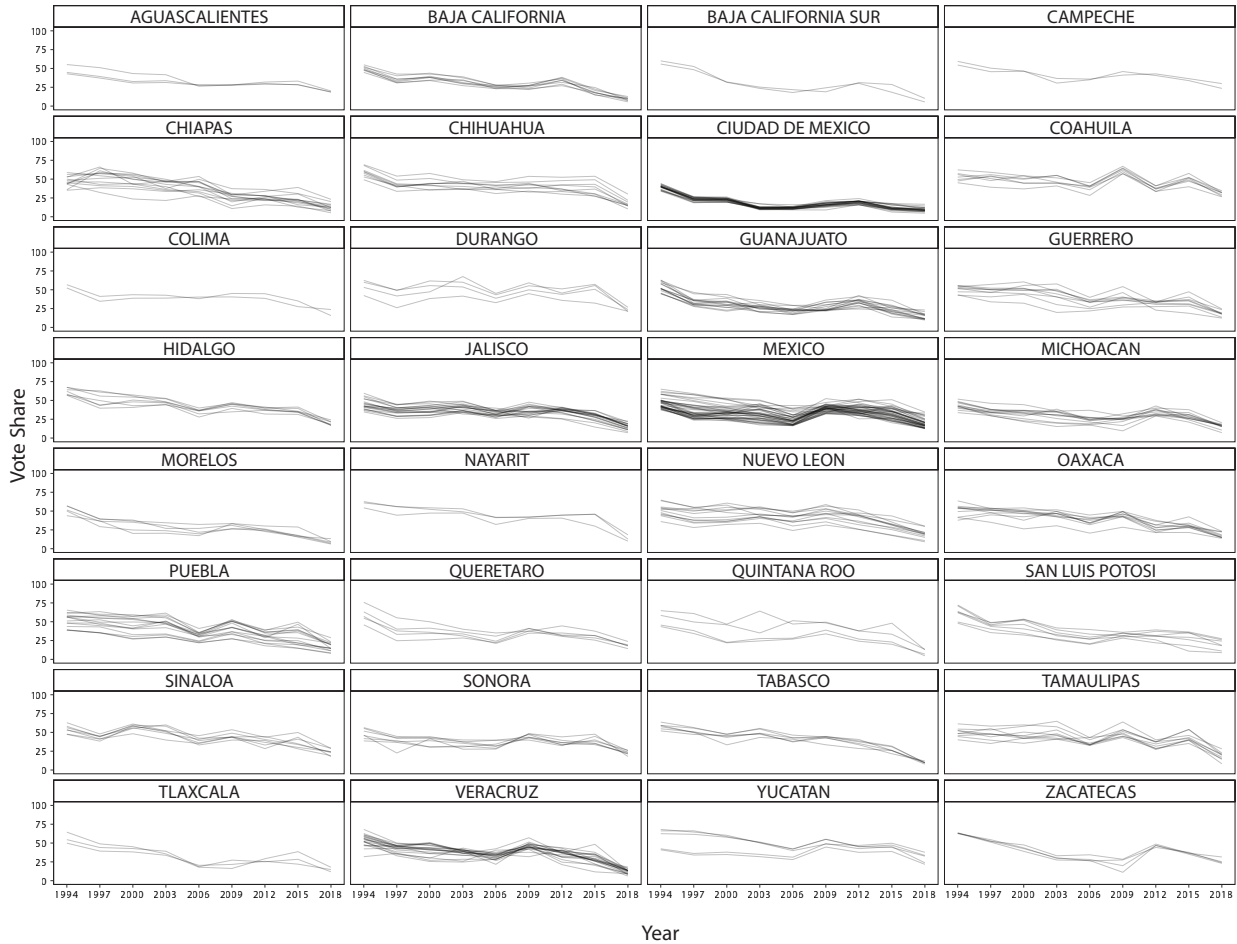
This first glance at the vote trends suggests a high variance on the district vote returns for the party. We explore further how much of this variance can be explained at the state level. Figures 2-5 distinguish the vote shares in every state for each party. The analysis confirms the high dynamic nationalization of the PRI, as all states present similar downwards trends. Moreover, Figure 2 also illustrates different levels of inter-district variation of vote shares across states, going from almost no variance in Mexico City, Baja California, and Tabasco to high variance for those districts in San Luis Potosí, State of Mexico, or Puebla.

Meanwhile, the PAN's vote-share trends appear more uniform over time than those observed for the PRI. With the exception of Veracruz, Sonora, and Jalisco, the fluctuations for the district vote-shares are very consistent within each state. This trend is clearer since 2006. In other words, most of the drop for the PAN's dynamic nationalization after 2006 can be explained by the variance of the vote trends at the state level.

In the case of the PRD, Figure 4 helps us to understand that most of the low static nationalization is explained by different levels of support across states. With the exception of Mexico City, the State of Mexico, Michoacan, Oaxaca, and Guerrero, the vote shares for the PRD are very uniform within states, suggesting that the variance for the PRD's vote returns across district can be partially explained by the political dynamics at the state level.

To formally estimate the different types of electoral variability, we update Morgenstern's (2017) analysis for Mexico by extending the panel series and suggesting a more

FIGURE 2. PRI vote share by district, split by state



Source: Own elaboration with data from the INE website (www.ine.mx).

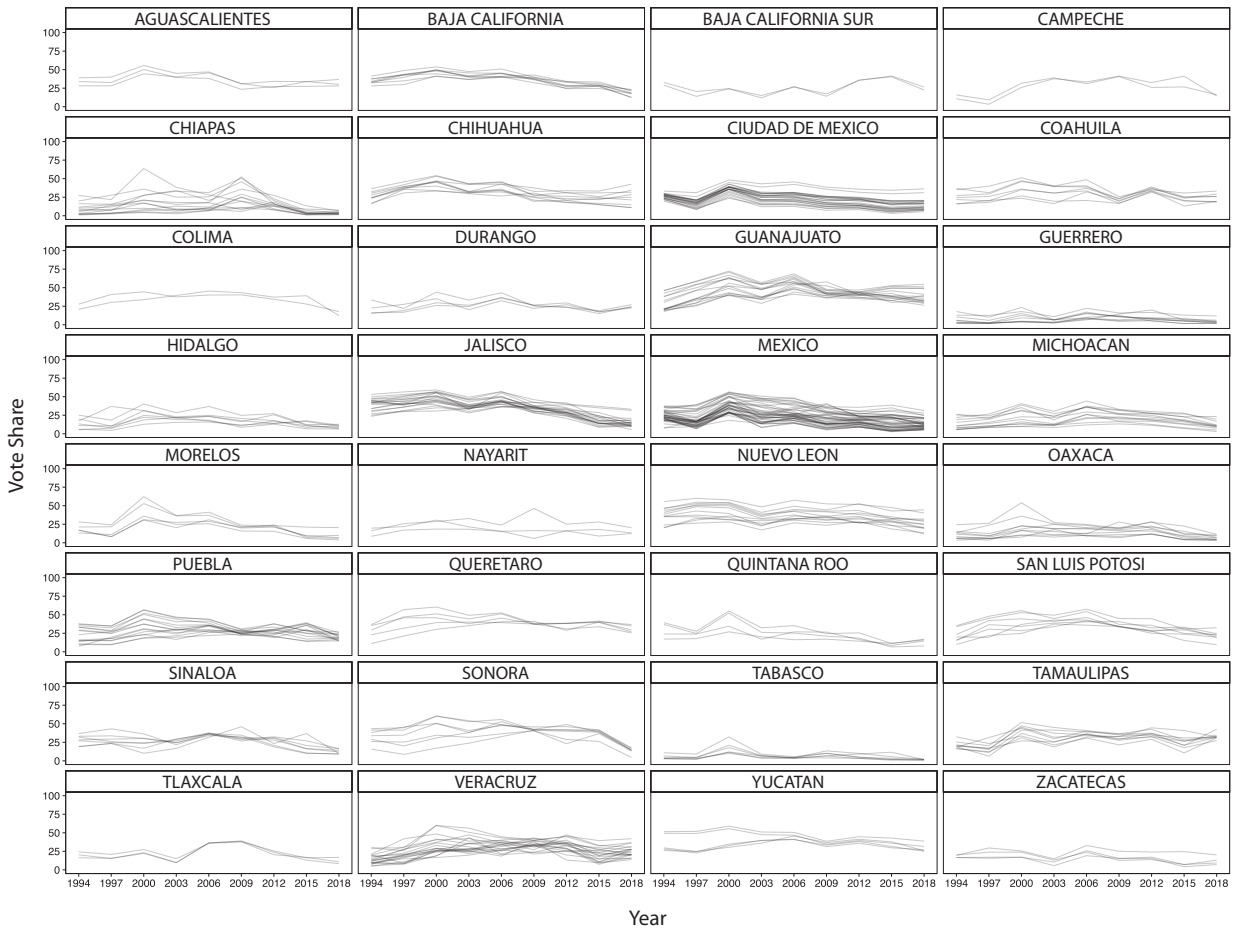
precise specification for the party’s national vote volatility. In this case, we follow Mustillo and Mustillo’s (2012) multilevel approach, which nests time within district as:

$$Vote_{pdt} = (\alpha_0 + \zeta_{0d}) + \sum_{t=1}^{N=3} \beta_t (t_{dt})^t + \zeta_{1d} (t_{dt}) + \varepsilon_{dt} \quad (1)$$

$$Vote_{pdt} = (\alpha_0 + \zeta_{0d}) + \gamma_{dt} State_d + \sum_{t=0}^{N=3} \beta_{t+1} (t_{dt})^t + \zeta_{1d} (t_{dt}) + \varepsilon_{dt} \quad (2)$$

Where $Vote_{pdt}$ is the vote share for a party p in district d and election t . Election t is an indexed ordinal variable for the sequence of elections in our database. The set of β

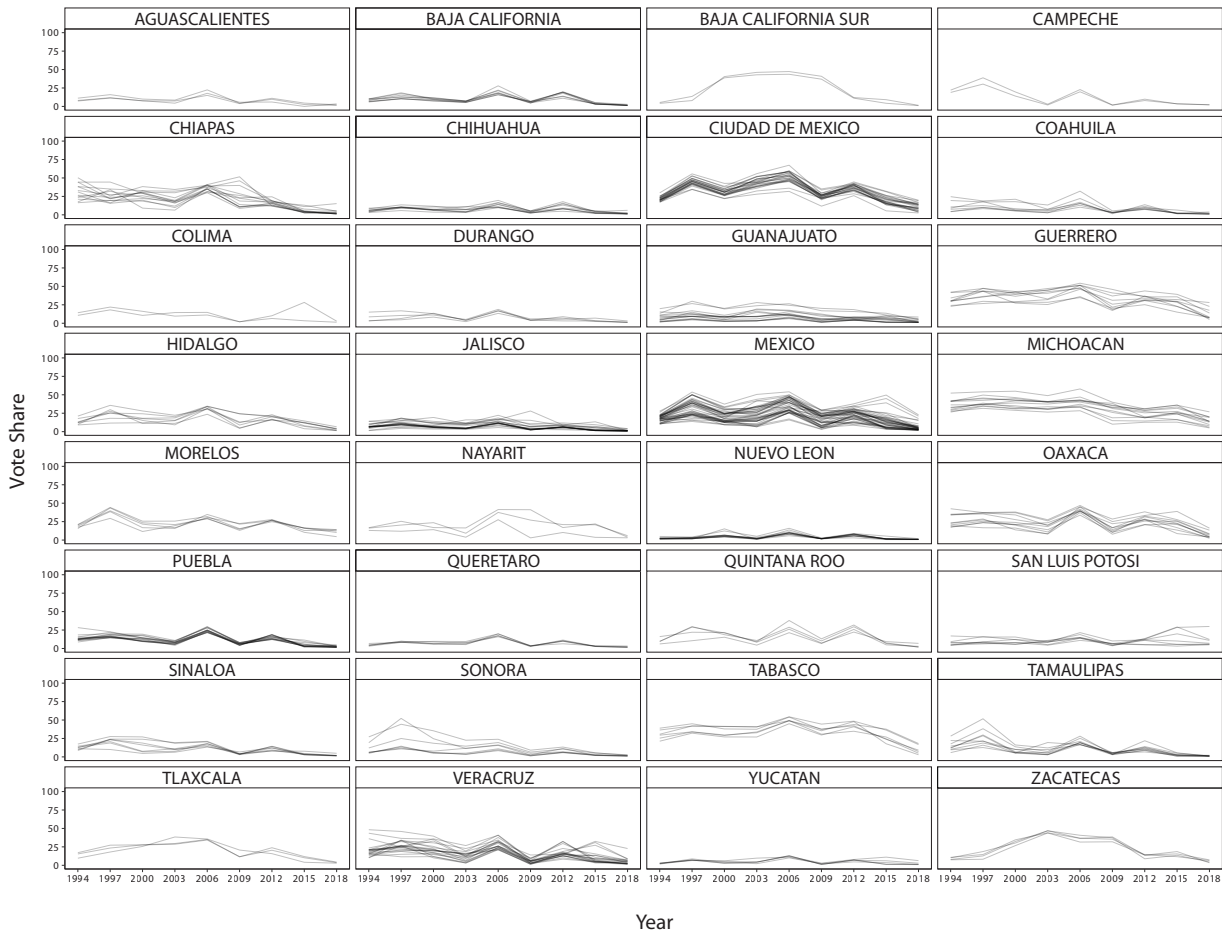
FIGURE 3. PAN vote share by district, split by state



Source: Own elaboration with data from the INE website (www.ine.mx).

models the trajectory of the national mean vote for the party —i.e., the red line in any of the plots of Figure 1— using a polynomial of order 3. ζ_{0d} y ζ_{1d} account for the variance of electoral support among districts. In particular, ζ_{0d} accounts for the durable district differences that explain dispersion of a party’s vote returns during the initial election. Therefore, lower values of ζ_{0d} can be interpreted as a high level of static nationalization. ζ_{1d} accounts for the variance in the initial rate of change. We assume that ζ_{0d} y ζ_{1d} are drawn from two independent distributions with mean zero and variance σ_0 y σ_1 , respectively, and an unknown covariance σ_{01} . Finally, the residual variance, ε_{dt} represents the district and time-specific unexplained variability in vote share trends. This estimate accounts for election-cycle features that may account for vote dispersion. We take this coefficient as our measurement for dynamic

FIGURE 4. PRD vote share by district, split by state



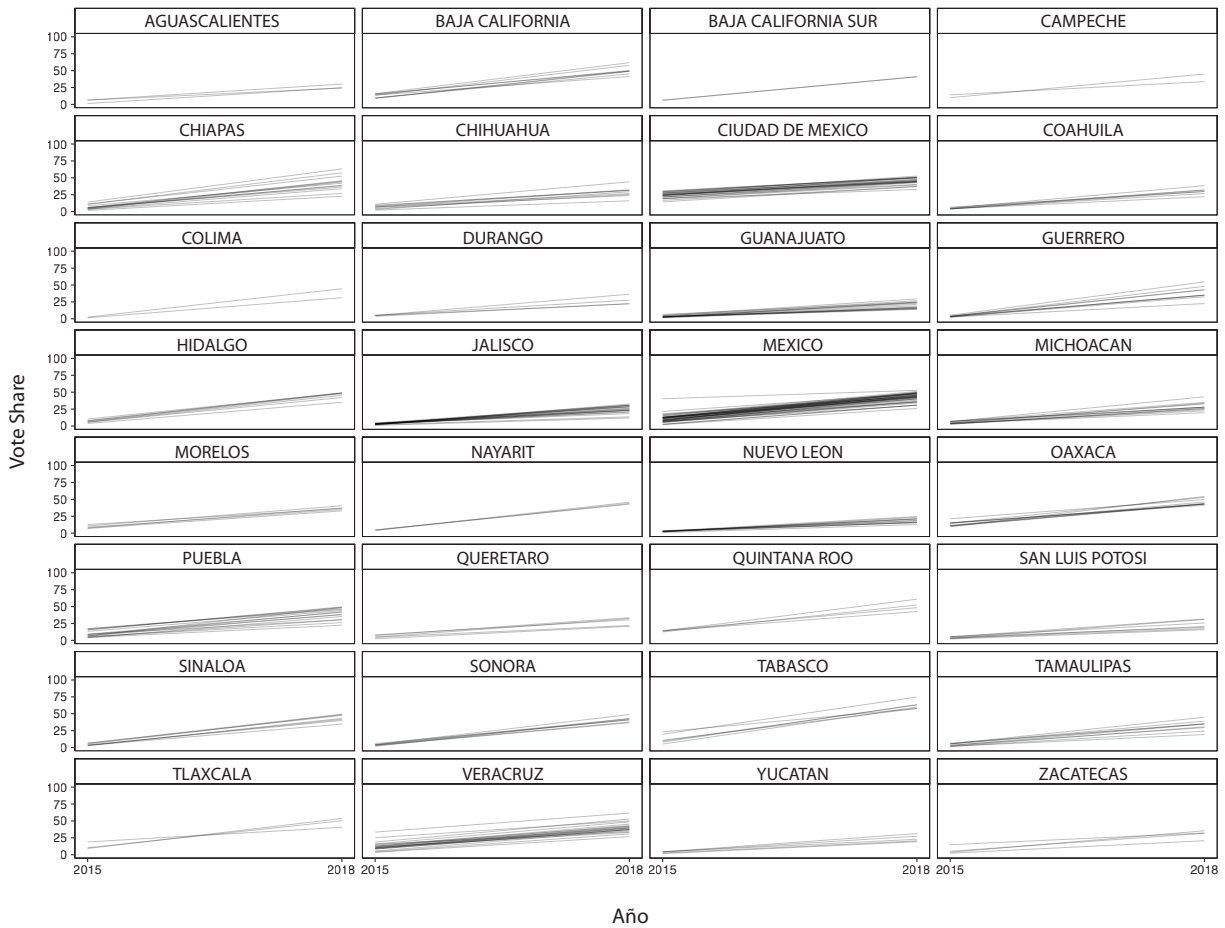
Source: Own elaboration with data from the INE website (www.ine.mx).

nationalization. Values of ε_{dt} closer to 0 suggest a high level of dynamic nationalization as there are fewer sources of cyclical dynamics.

Equation (2) proposes an alternative specification that includes $State_d$, which is a battery of state dummy variables to identify the state that each district belongs to. This specification tries to capture any heterogeneity of the vote shares produced at the state level. We present the analysis with and without this covariate to compare how our measures of nationalization depend on the state effects.

Table 1 shows the results for the last nine federal elections in the country. To make a fair comparison of the parameters across parties, we leave out Morena from this analysis. The Appendix, however, shows the results for all parties using a less complex model that only includes the last two federal elections.

FIGURE 5. Morena vote share by district, split by state



Source: Own elaboration with data from the INE website (www.ine.mx).

We first discuss the models that do not include state controls, which confirm the visual inspection of Figure 1. The value of ζ_{0d} in model (1), which represents the variance in the PRI's district-level electoral support around its national mean, is 73.9. This means that, in the absence of any other systematic variance, 68 per cent (or one standard deviation) of the district-level shares for the PRI fall within an interval of 8.6 per cent above and below the national mean. In contrast, the values of ζ_{0d} in models (3) and (5) suggest that 68 per cent of the district-level shares for the PAN and PRD range around 11.9 and 12.3 per cent, respectively, above and below their national means. These results suggest a larger static nationalization for the PRI than for the other two parties. This demonstrates that the PRI receives more uniform support across the country, compared to the other two parties, whose support is concentrated in certain regions.

TABLE 1. Models for district-level vote support, 1994-2018

	PRI	PRI	PAN	PAN	PRD	PRD
Time	-12.301*** (0.383)	-12.301*** (0.383)	7.629*** (0.403)	7.629*** (0.403)	2.859*** (0.473)	2.859*** (0.473)
Election ²	3.223*** (0.115)	3.223*** (0.115)	-1.761*** (0.120)	-1.761*** (0.120)	-0.461*** (0.143)	-0.461*** (0.143)
Election ³	-0.274*** (0.009)	-0.274*** (0.009)	0.090*** (0.010)	0.090*** (0.010)	-0.011 (0.012)	-0.011 (0.012)
Constant	49.827*** (0.596)	48.405*** (2.509)	22.938*** (0.790)	32.656*** (3.311)	17.606*** (0.688)	8.761*** (0.535)
State effects		✓		✓		✓
Random effects						
ζ_{0d} (Static nationalization)	73.96	53.23	151.77	85.98	143.64	35.13
ζ_{1d}	0.57	0.57	1.48	1.48	0.36	0.36
ε_{dt} (Dynamic nationalization)	37.98	37.98	41.21	41.21	56.06	56.06
Observations	2700	2700	2700	2700	2700	2700
Districts	300	300	300	300	300	300
Elections	9	9	9	9	9	9
Log Likelihood	-9227.219	-9056.879	-9497.081	-9315.877	-9736.869	-9489.108
AIC	18470.440	18191.760	19010.160	18709.750	19485.740	19052.220
BIC	18517.650	18421.900	19057.370	18939.890	19521.140	19270.550

Source: Own elaboration with data from the INE website (www.ine.mx). *** $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$; * $p < .1$.

Regarding dynamic nationalization, we consider the non-uniform swings in the district-level votes observed in Figure 1. The values of ε_{dt} for the PRI and PAN are 37.98 and 41.21, respectively, suggesting that the swings for both parties are relatively uniform across districts. In contrast, the size of this parameter for the PRD's models is 56.06, representing a lower dynamic nationalization than the other two parties. These findings demonstrate that the PRI is the most nationalized of the three parties on both dimensions. All three parties appear to be unbalanced, however, the PRD is the closest of the three parties to being a localized party, and the PRI is a moderately nationalized party.

The models that include the state dummies explore the vote share trends in a similar way to Figures 2-5, allowing us to contextualize the heterogeneity of the vote trends. For the case of the PRI, its static variance estimate drops from 73.4 in Model 1 to 53.2 in Model 2. This tells us that the state effects account for 27 per cent of the variance in the party's district-level support. While such reduction for the

cross-district variance helps us understand more about the party's static nationalization, the observed effect is lower than what we observe for the PAN and PRD. The inclusion of the state effects accounts for 43 and 75 per cent of the variance in the district-level support for PRD and PAN, respectively. This means that much of the low static nationalization levels for these two parties can be explained by the dynamics within the states.

These results differ from Morgenstern's expectations. For example, Morgenstern, Swindle and Castagnola (2009) have previously found that Mexico's party system is low on the static nationalization dimension, and low to moderate on the dynamic dimension. They conclude that Mexican parties are closer to locally-focused (similar to the US). However, we find that the Mexican party system scores low on the static dimension but relatively high on dynamic nationalization, suggesting that Mexican parties tend to be unbalanced instead. In addition, our results also suggest that party differences matter. It is clear that PRI's differences distinguish them from PAN and PRD, and that the PRD and PAN are both experiencing changes that are specific to the party.

Observe that the results in Table 1 describe the overall patterns for the parties for the entire period. This approach, however, does not allow us to perceive significant changes in the vote trends across elections. To address this limitation, we use an approach proposed by Bartels (1998), who measures the relative nationalization of the party vote for each election. Building on Stokes (1967), Bartels provides a way to decompose the election results within a district into 1) the standing party loyalties in the district, 2) the shifting tides of electoral support at the national level, and 3) the fleeting district forces at work. The model is specified as:

$$Vote_{pdst} = \alpha_t + \beta_1 Vote_{pdst-1} + \beta_2 Vote_{pdst-2} + \gamma_{st} + \epsilon_{dst} \quad (3)$$

Where $Vote_{pdst}$ is the vote share for party p in district d and state s at election year t . $Vote_{pdst-1}$ y $Vote_{pdst-2}$ represent the vote shares for the same party and district in the two previous federal elections. The intercept parameter α_t accounts for the mean national support of a party at a given election. γ_{st} is a parameter that accounts for the state forces of the election results in the district at a given time. Finally, ϵ_{dst} is the stochastic term accounting for the idiosyncratic forces of the district during a specific election. We assume that, ϵ_{dst} is drawn from a probability distribution with mean zero and election-specific variance σ^2_{dpt} .

The model in equation (3) differs from the one proposed by Bartels (1998) in three aspects. First, similar to Lupu (2015), we use the vote shares for every party as the dependent variable, rather than the difference of the two main parties' vote shares. This allows us to study the different components of the vote support in multiparty systems. Second, since Morena has competed in only two federal elections,

TABLE 2. Components of party vote, 2000-2018

	Year	(1) District Forces σ	(2) State Forces (absolute mean)	(3) National Force α	(4) First lag β_1	(5) Second lag β_2	(6) Partisan loyalties $\beta_1 + \beta_2$
PRI	2000	3.79	5.26	-6.26 (0.05)	0.59 (0.05)	0.34 (0.05)	0.94
	2003	4.63	4.61	6.85 (0.07)	0.53 (0.07)	0.24 (0.07)	0.77
	2006	3.40	3.53	4.61 (0.04)	0.25 (0.04)	0.38 (0.04)	0.64
	2009	4.54	9.28	11.29 (0.07)	0.26 (0.07)	0.28 (0.06)	0.53
	2012	3.97	4.09	11.54 (0.05)	0.32 (0.05)	0.34 (0.05)	0.66
	2015	4.92	5.45	0.97 (0.07)	0.74 (0.07)	0.25 (0.06)	0.98
	2018	3.24	3.91	1.86 (0.04)	0.34 (0.04)	0.23 (0.05)	0.57
PAN	2000	4.71	5.44	8.83 (0.06)	0.44 (0.06)	0.78 (0.06)	1.22
	2003	5.21	5.73	8.14 (0.05)	0.64 (0.05)	0.04 (0.07)	0.68
	2006	4.02	5.23	12.19 (0.05)	0.45 (0.05)	0.26 (0.04)	0.71
	2009	5.70	6.59	1.33 (0.08)	0.59 (0.08)	0.03 (0.07)	0.62
	2012	3.95	3.46	2.44 (0.04)	0.19 (0.04)	0.50 (0.04)	0.69
	2015	5.06	8.39	4.57 (0.06)	0.69 (0.06)	0.25 (0.05)	0.93
	2018	3.82	9.01	6.46 (0.04)	0.39 (0.04)	0.43 (0.05)	0.83
PRD	2000	3.65	5.04	-0.62 (0.04)	0.32 (0.04)	0.55 (0.05)	0.87
	2003	4.52	5.18	-0.28 (0.06)	0.69 (0.06)	0.10 (0.05)	0.79
	2006	3.66	5.08	12.12 (0.05)	0.39 (0.05)	0.41 (0.05)	0.80
	2009	4.88	3.44	-4.07 (0.07)	0.34 (0.07)	0.36 (0.07)	0.69
	2012	3.36	4.59	-0.13 (0.04)	0.10 (0.04)	0.48 (0.04)	0.58
	2015	5.28	3.55	-4.04 (0.08)	0.57 (0.08)	0.27 (0.06)	0.84
	2018	2.57	1.85	1.18 (0.03)	0.47 (0.03)	0.00 (0.04)	0.47
Morena	2015	3.48	2.56	1.01 (0.05)	0.46 (0.05)	-0.11 (0.04)	0.35
	2018	5.32	7.48	19.83 (0.09)	0.70 (0.09)	0.37 (0.08)	1.07

Source: Own elaboration with data from the INE website (www.ine.mx). *Note:* Standard errors in parentheses.

we use the PRD vote shares for the lagged terms of both Morena and PRD. Finally, our estimates are reported using Seemingly Unrelated Regressions (Zellner, 1962), which allow correlated errors across the models for each party vote share in a given year. Running a system of equations for each election year introduces additional information to considering the individual equations separately.

Table 2 presents the estimates of the parameters of interest for each party and election from 2000 to 2018. Each row corresponds to a regression for the vote shares of a party in a given year. Column 1 in the table shows the estimated stochastic variance of the district forces in a given year. Column 2 shows the average of the esti-

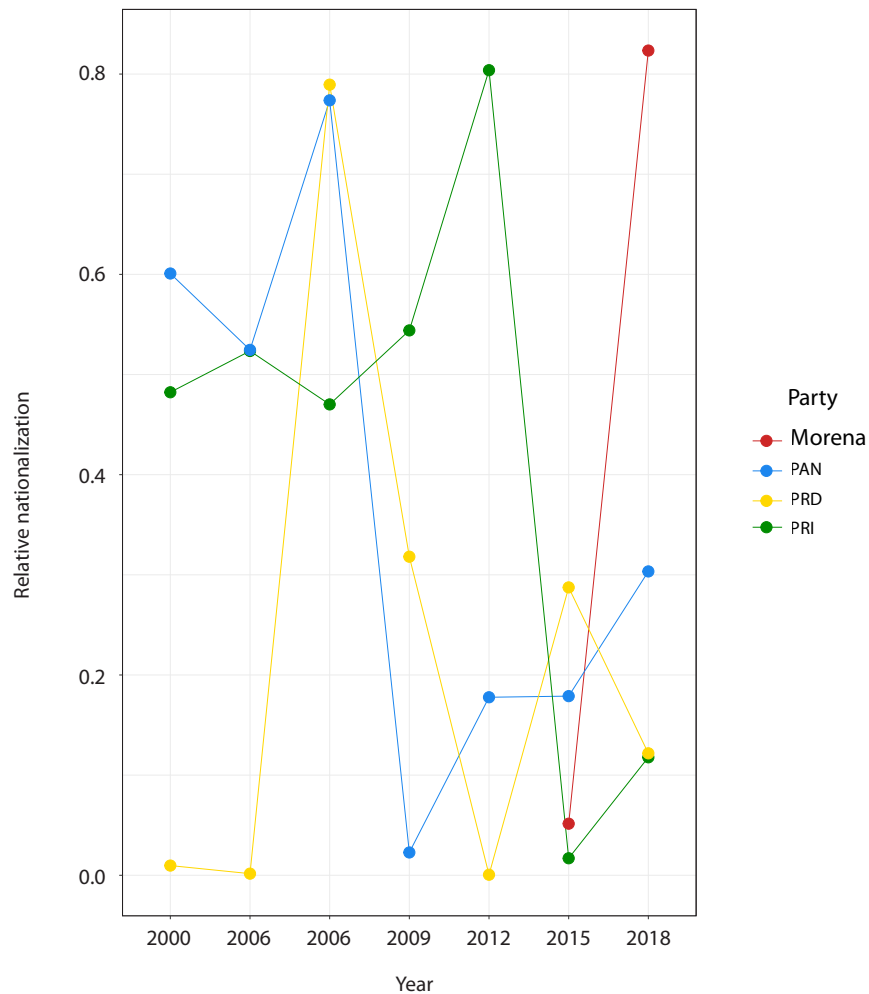
mated state vote-swings during the election. Column 3 presents the estimated national party support. Columns 4 and 5 show the estimated persistence of the two preceding election results in the district. Finally, Column 6 estimates the stability of the partisan support in the district by adding up the size of the coefficients for the two lagged terms. All the values are presented in percentage points, and values in parentheses denote the standard errors for the parameters.

The estimated parameters can help us understand the fluctuations of the vote components for the parties over time. Before the 2018 election, the district forces are similar across parties and the steadiest component of the vote over time. Both the state and national components present more volatile, inconsistent patterns for the parties. Consider, for example, the case of the PAN's national force, where it shows their highest values for the presidential elections. All the components for the PRD seem to decline for the 2018 election, while the vote for Morena seems to be driven by the national and state forces. To assess the strength of the national component of the vote for each party and election, we follow Lupu's (2015) estimation for the relative nationalization of the vote as the ratio of the national variance to the sum of the national, state, and district variances.² This ratio is estimated as:

$$\text{Relative Nationalization}_{pt} = \frac{\alpha_t^2}{\alpha_t^2 + \gamma_{st}^2 + \epsilon_{dst}^2} \quad (4)$$

Figure 6 summarizes the estimation of *Relative Nationalization* for each party and election year. These estimations show a relatively nationalized party system during the 2000-2006 period and its downtrend afterwards. The national component of the PRI's election results was relatively high until 2012. For the last two federal elections, in contrast, the variance of its vote shares is mostly explained by the state or district components. For the case of the PAN, its relative nationalization collapsed after the 2006 election. The measurement's value for the PAN has risen during the last three elections, and it explains about a third of the total variance for 2018. The relative nationalization for the PRD has been consistently low with the exception of the 2006 election. Finally, the success of Morena in the most recent election was strongly determined by the national forces at play as illustrated by its high relative nationalization in 2018. This level of relative nationalization is similar to the PAN and PRD's in 2006 or PRI's in 2012.

² Lupu (2015) modifies the estimation proposed by Bartels (1998) to incorporate the effect of the province variance in Argentina.

FIGURE 6. Relative nationalization of Mexican parties 2000-2018

Source: Own elaboration with data from the INE website (www.ine.mx).

Figure 6 also shows a general increase in relative nationalization for the parties when legislative elections are concurrent with the presidential one. In other words, the vote shares across districts for a party increase in a similar direction and magnitude when legislative candidates campaign along their presidential candidate. This pattern shows the influence of presidential campaigns on the overall vote shares that a party receives across districts. Presidential candidates focus on promoting broad, national policies. At the same time, since the presidential race draws most of the coverage from media, legislative candidates find easier to align their campaign messages to those proposed by their co-partisan presidential candidate (Samuels 2002, 2003). Midterm races, on the other hand, allows us to observe the performance of a party without the effects of a national race, allowing candidates to em-

phasize local issues and to parties to strategically allocate resources in their more competitive districts (Poiré, 2005).

A complementary interpretation for the overall rise of parties' relative nationalization every six years is the strength of presidential coattails. This theory predicts that the more votes a presidential candidate receives, the better the legislative candidates of the same party will do (Golder, 2006; Ferejohn and Calvert, 1984). The electoral politics literature explains this relationship as the attention that the media and voters pay to the presidential race over any other election. As a result, a good presidential candidate can be a useful cue about the other candidates of the same party. In the Mexican case, Magar (2012) has already shown a close relationship between presidential and deputy vote shares since 1982.

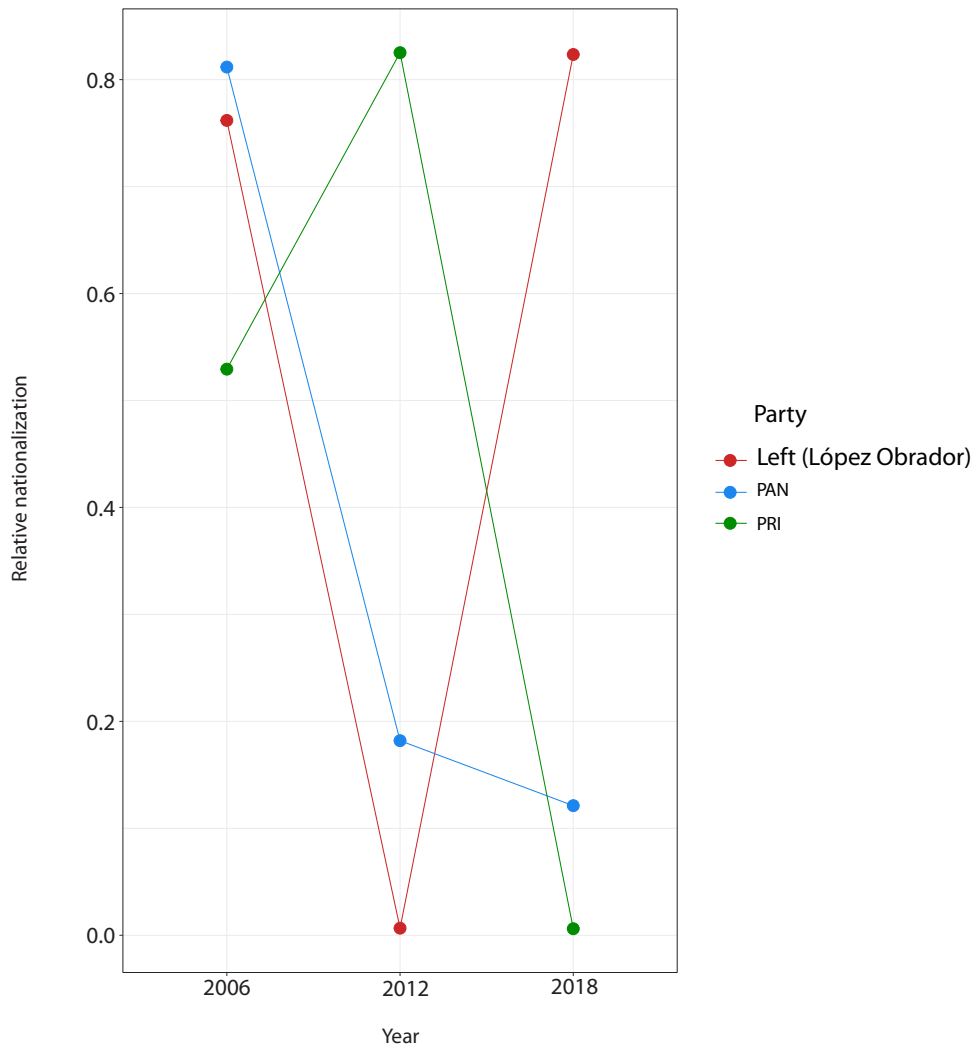
It could be the case, however, that pooling together vote shares of presidential and non-presidential election years as lagged terms introduces noise to the estimations, and it may obscure the national strength of parties. We check for this issue by only including election years with concurrent presidential elections in our estimations, as shown in Figure 7. This exercise actually allows us to estimate the nationalization of the party endorsing López Obrador as its presidential candidate over the last three presidential elections. The figure shows the collapse of PAN and PRI's relative nationalization after 2006 and 2012, respectively. The relative size of the national component explaining the party vote variance goes from more than 80 per cent to below 20 per cent at its best. It also shows that the strong national electoral component of López Obrador's party during 2006 and 2018 was replaced by the PRI in 2012.

In sum, the analysis suggests that a successful election outcome has largely relied on the national forces of the parties rather than the district contribution of the vote. Moreover, while the PRD continues to appear to be more of a regional party, the poor electoral performance of the PAN and PRI in 2018 does not seem to be followed by the vanishing of the national forces of their vote. Time will tell whether these parties can sustain their national forces for the next elections. In the case of Morena, its electoral success in 2018 shows similar trends to those exhibited by successful parties in previous elections, even scoring higher than any other party in terms of relative nationalization. This suggests that Morena are not disrupting the party system, but are simply following established trends in Mexican electoral competition. Whether Morena could establish itself as a national party when López Obrador is not on the ballot is a question to be answered during the 2021 federal elections.

CONCLUSION

This article evaluates the patterns of party nationalization in Mexico from the last nine federal elections. Our findings suggest that the PRI and PAN continue to produce similar nationalization scores to those produced in the past, while the PRD has become increasingly nationalized as a result of the decline of its electoral support.

FIGURE 7. Relative nationalization of Mexican parties during presidential election, 2006-2018



Source: Own elaboration with data from the INE website (www.ine.mx).

The PRD’s falling vote share has occurred at the same time as the rise of Morena, who appear to have slotted in to the party system without causing a great deal of instability. We find that their patterns of electoral support are similar to other parties in previous years.


The analysis shows that Mexican parties are strongly nationalized on the dynamic dimension, and that a great deal of the variance in the static dimension is explained at the state level. These findings reinterpret the low levels of static nationalization as a product of state local politics rather than what district candidates

or dynamics can influence the system. We also show the similarities of the nationalization levels for the PAN in 2006, PRI in 2012, and Morena in 2018. In these three elections, presidential campaigns created strong coattails that move electoral support across districts in the same direction. This finding suggests that the swings of the Mexican electorate follow national rather than local issues.

For the specific case of the 2018 election, Morena's performance in terms of dynamic nationalization shows the importance of a successful, nationalized presidential campaign to increase the level of national support for a party. During the 2015 legislative elections, Morena concentrated its electoral support in Mexico City, Tabasco, and some districts in Veracruz. For the last presidential election, López Obrador's popularity and visibility contributed to the increase of the party's support in each of the 300 districts in the country. It is to be seen in the next elections whether Morena can keep this support throughout the next elections and without the appearance of its *de facto* leader on the ballot.

Our findings also suggest a potential strategy for the opposition parties to recover from their overwhelming defeat in 2018. To rebuild their national structure, parties need first to keep the support of their local strongholds. The relatively low levels of static nationalization suggest the importance of local politics setting up the baseline support of the parties in each state. As it was the case for the PAN before 2000 (Lujambio, 2001) or the PRI between 2000 and 2012 (Langston, 2017), parties need to start local by first defending their strongholds and gradually start building a national strategy.

Our analysis, however, is not free from caveats. We suggest here two limitations of our findings and potential ways in which scholars can explore related questions for the study of party systems in Mexico and elsewhere. First, the conventional approach of studying regionalism in vote patterns in the country should be further explored. As our findings show, most of the variance in electoral support for parties can be explained at the state level. As a result, including region fixed effects in the Mexican case appears to be a noisy way for accounting variations in vote support.

Second, the nature of our data does not allow us to distinguish whether the different geographic patterns we find respond to local politics or to the different attitudes and behaviors of voters across states. In particular, while the low levels of static nationalization we document suggest that parties enjoy a default level of support across states, it remains unclear whether these differences come from the strength of the political machines in every state or attitudinal differences of voters supporting each of the parties. Similarly, given that we know the importance of state governors in Mexico, there is reason to explore how parties in decentralized systems may be sub-nationally organized. These questions present an invitation to scholars to revisit this topic and expand its findings. 

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Anger, Partisanship, and the Activation of Populist Attitudes in Mexico

Rodrigo Castro Cornejo, Sandra Ley and Ulises Beltrán*

ABSTRACT: This article analyzes the populist activation of the electorate during the 2018 presidential election in Mexico, which requires a set of conditions. First, voters need to report grievances about the country's political, economic, and social situation. Moreover, it is necessary the role of ambitious politicians to make those grievances salient among voters, in order for voters to be responsive to candidate's populist rhetoric and translate their anger into electoral behavior. However, as opposed to previous studies, we argue that not every voter will be mobilized as a response to populist rhetoric, even if they register the same level of populist attitudes. Consistent with the political behavior literature, we argue that voters' party identification constitutes a filter of information that makes co-partisan voters more likely to accept the populist rhetoric when it is consistent with their political predispositions. In other words, if the populist rhetoric contradicts voters' partisanship, voters will reject the candidate's populist rhetoric even though those voters report a high level of populist attitudes.

KEYWORDS: populism, partisanship, elections, Mexico, campaigns.

Enojo, identidad partidista y la activación populista del electorado en México

RESUMEN: Este artículo estudia la activación populista del electorado en la elección presidencial de 2018 en México, la cual requiere una serie de condiciones. Por un lado, los votantes deben sentir un agravio sobre la situación política, económica o social en el país. Además, es necesaria la capacidad de políticos ambiciosos para hacer relevantes esos agravios entre el electorado y así los votantes

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respondan a la retórica populista para traducir su enojo en movilización electoral. Sin embargo, a diferencia de otros estudios, argumentamos que no todos los votantes son movilizados por igual como respuesta a la retórica populista, incluso si registran un nivel similar de actitudes populistas. De acuerdo con la literatura sobre comportamiento político, argumentamos que la identidad partidista de los votantes constituye un filtro de información que hace más probable que los electores acepten la retórica populista si es consistente con sus predisposiciones políticas. Por el contrario, si la retórica populista contradice su identidad partidista, los votantes rechazarán la retórica del candidato populista a pesar de que esos votantes registren un nivel alto de actitudes populistas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: populismo, identidad partidista, elecciones, México, campañas.

The literature on populism has focused mainly on explaining the populist supply among political elites through the analysis of political manifestos and speeches, along with the behavior of populist candidates and leaders (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007; Hawkins, 2009; Rooduijn and Pauwels, 2011). However, few studies have been devoted to understanding the role that populist attitudes have among voters, particularly during political campaigns. This study is part of a growing literature that seeks to explain populism on the side of political demand. Specifically, we seek to answer the following related questions: How do populist attitudes affect voters during campaigns? What is the effect of such attitudes on their voting behavior? Do populist attitudes affect all voters equally?

In this article, we argue that three conditions are required for populist activation of the electorate: a national context that hurts the electorate, a populist framing, and mobilization of anger among the electorate (Akkerman *et al.*, 2014; Aguilar and Carlin, 2017; Hawkins *et al.*, 2018). First, it is necessary for voters to feel a *grievance*¹ about the political, economic, or social situation in the country. Given that discontent, it is equally necessary for ambitious politicians to make such grievances salient among the electorate so that voters can respond to a populist framing and their anger can translate into electoral support. However, unlike other studies, we argue that not all voters are mobilized equally in response to populist framing, even if they register a similar level of populist attitudes. Consistent with the voting behavior literature (Zaller, 1992; Green, Palmquist y Schickler, 2004), we argue that the partisanship of voters constitutes an information filter that will make voters more likely to accept a populist framing that is consistent with their political predispositions. Or, conversely, if the populist framing contradicts their partisanship, voters will reject the populist candidate's framing despite their relatively high degree of populist attitudes.

To analyze the argument of this article, we focus on the 2018 presidential election in Mexico. The 2018 National Electoral Study, which is part of the *Comparative*

¹ Grievances can arise in two ways: a lack of fulfillment of political promises or a lack of representation. The first may give rise to the second, and hence this study uses "grievance" as a general term for these two distinct, but interrelated possible alternatives.

Study of Electoral Systems (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020), included questions about the political context in Mexico and the populist framing of Morena's candidate for the presidency, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, as well as a battery of questions measuring the degree of populist attitudes of voters in Mexico. The present study finds that partisanship constitutes a moderator of populist framing: voters whose political predispositions are at odds with López Obrador do not see their populist attitudes translated into electoral mobilization. In contrast, populist attitudes both among co-partisans and among independent voters were activated in the presidential campaign and translated into electoral mobilization.

This work contributes in different ways to the study of the demand for populism and the conditions that allow translating populist attitudes into electoral behavior. First, this research represents, to the best of our knowledge, the first attempt to analyze in one case study the three conditions necessary for populist activation of voters; namely, context, populist framing, and mobilization. Second, this work introduces a variable that is rarely considered in the study of populist attitudes, but that is central to the acceptance of populist framing and activation of the electorate: voters' partisanship.

The article is organized as follows. In the first section, we describe the growing literature on populism in comparative politics. In the second section, we present our theory of populist activation of the electorate and derive hypotheses. In the third section, we analyze the context that led to the success of a populist candidacy in the 2018 presidential election in Mexico. Later, we present the empirical strategy of this study based on Module 5 on populism of the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems* (CSES). Finally, we discuss the results of this study and its implications in comparative perspective.

POPULISM, VOTERS, AND PARTIES

The comparative literature on populism has focused primarily on explaining the populist offer among political elites through the analysis of partisan manifestos, campaign speeches, and the media (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007; Hawkins, 2009; Rooduijn and Pauwels, 2011; Rooduijn, 2014; Rooduijn, De Lange y Van der Brug, 2014). The growing electoral success of populist parties in various regions of the world has prompted a broader debate about what populism entails. In general, there are four different definitions of populism: structuralist, economic, institutional-political or strategic, and ideational (Hawkins and Rovira, 2017). Both the structuralist and the economic approaches define populism in terms of the actions and interests of political leaders towards the implementation of a macroeconomic model that seeks short-term growth through economic policies such as import substitution industrialization, with the populist candidate aiming to mobilize his or her voters (Cardoso and Faletto, 1979; Oxhorn, 1998; Vilas, 1992; Dornbusch and Edwards,

1991). According to the strategic definition, populism is built through charismatic leadership with an anti-elite discourse that appeals to direct democracy or a style of government more closely aligned to the best interest of the people (Barr, 2009; Weyland, 2001). Thus, these two approaches to populism focus mainly on political discourse and supply, limiting the possibility of understanding the diffusion and prevalence of populist attitudes in the electorate.

In contrast, the ideational approach has become the most widely used theoretical framework in political science to understand the growing number of populist movements, parties, and candidacies in various regions of the world (Laclau, 2005; Mudde and Rovira, 2012). The ideational approach defines populism as a unique set of ideas, in which politics is understood as a Manichaeian struggle between the people's goodwill and a conspiratorial elite (Hawkins, 2009, 2010; Mudde and Rovira, 2012). Following the ideational logic, there are three factors that make up populism: 1) a Manichaeian and moral cosmology; 2) a proclamation of the "people" as a homogeneous and virtuous community; and 3) a representation of "the elite" as corrupt, selfish, and self-serving. Contrary to structuralist or strategic definitions, according to the ideational approach, the reference to the "people" as a superior entity for the identification of populism is not enough; instead, these three characteristics must be jointly present. One of the main advantages of the ideational approach is that it makes possible to identify the populist elements present in the speeches and attitudes of political leaders, as well as their manifestation and prevalence among the electorate. In this way, going beyond support for populist leaders, the most recent literature has examined the factors behind populist attitudes among voters, following the ideational view and thus complementing the dimension of populist *demand* (Aguilar and Carlin, 2017; Hawkins *et al.*, 2018; Meléndez and Rovira, 2017, among others).

Previous studies on populist attitudes have identified, in general terms, three conditions for their activation: context, framing, and mobilization. It should be noted that, although these three different elements have been considered as crucial for the activation of populist attitudes, empirical studies in this regard usually focus on a particular element—context, framing, *or* anger—without analyzing them as a whole or referring to the processes by which they are activated during campaigns. Furthermore, it is important to also emphasize that most of the works do not usually use survey data and their geographical coverage is usually limited to European countries (Spruyt *et al.*, 2016; Tsatsanis *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, we still know little about the logic of its emergence and prevalence in Latin American countries. The limited evidence in the region has been concentrated in the Chilean case (Aguilar and Carlin, 2017; Hawkins *et al.*, 2018), along with general reviews of support for populist leaders in Latin America (Doyle, 2011), although without an understanding at the individual level.

The next section details our theory of populist activation of the electorate. As we explain, unlike previous studies that have analyzed populist attitudes, the present study focuses on the conditions that allow the activation of such attitudes among voters. We argue that populist attitudes are not relevant in themselves, but require both an activation under a given context and the work of ambitious politicians with the capacity to effectively politicize the grievances of the electorate. Likewise, our theory argues that the voters' response to populist framing depends not only on the populist attitudes prevailing among voters, but also on the political predispositions of the voters. Specifically, we argue that partisanship can hinder or facilitate voters' responses to this populist framing during political campaigns, depending on whether or not that identity agrees with the candidate of the party that represents it.

POPULIST ACTIVATION OF THE ELECTORATE

The growing academic consensus around the ideational approach argues that populism characterizes the public sphere as divided between the “people” and a type of elite or political establishment (Laclau, 2005; Mudde and Rovira, 2012). Populism unites the demands and grievances around the “people”, which can only be successfully mobilized if there is a favorable context for populist rhetoric (Borschier, 2010; Roberts, 2012), which varies in each country or region. Some studies suggest that perceived socioeconomic vulnerability (Spruyt *et al.*, 2016) is associated with a higher prevalence of populist attitudes among individuals, probably because the perception of economic failure weakens the democratic legitimacy of the political class. For example, in the cases of Europe and the United States, this context is constructed from the growing relevance of cultural and identity cleavages (“cultural backlash”, Mudde, 2007; Kriesi, 2010; Inglehart and Norris, 2018), as well as the effects of globalization (“losers of globalization”, Borschier, 2010; Kriesi *et al.*, 2012; Teney *et al.*, 2014; Rama and Cordero, 2018), both of which are triggers of populist demand among voters. Populist candidates in such contexts have been able to take advantage of both significant representation deficits—policies that voters support but have not been successfully channeled by parties and elites—and valence deficits—economic prosperity, good governance, security, etc.—that political elites have been unable to address (Hawkins *et al.*, 2017; Roberts, 2012).

It is important to mention, however, that not just any context constitutes an opportunity for populist mobilization. As explained by Hawkins *et al.* (2018), fertile grounds for populism are the scandals that show deeply rooted behavior such as, for example, systemic corruption (Hanley and Sikk, 2014; Hawkins, 2010; De la Torre, 2010), which generates citizen dissatisfaction with democracy (Kriesi, 2014). Large-scale scandals can vary in each party system, but what is relevant is the generation of a perception of the political elite as a group colluded against the “people”. This

context weakens the democratic legitimacy of the parties and the political class and makes a populist candidacy an option in response to that crisis of legitimacy.

It should be noted that populism studies tend to assume that voters effectively perceive the failures that the populist candidate denounces in the country, which are in turn translated into negative evaluations of the national context. However, these negative evaluations must be verified empirically—for example, through opinion polls—to identify whether such a context conducive to populist mobilization is indeed recognized among the electorate. Furthermore, it is necessary to consider that it is possible that the electorate's populist attitudes (Akkerman *et al.*, 2014; Hawking *et al.*, 2018) exacerbate the negative evaluation of the national situation, so that voters with a lower degree of populist attitudes see this context as less negative. This means that this context is limited not only by objective conditions of the economy, security, or corruption in each country, but also by the perceptions with which voters view that national context. Thus, the first hypothesis of this study is the following:

H1 (context). The greater the degree of populist attitudes among voters, the greater the probability of reporting negative evaluations of the national context.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that the political context and the corresponding evaluations do not in themselves generate populist mobilization. Many voters may indeed possess populist attitudes, but these can remain latent (Hawkins and Rovira, 2017) and not manifest themselves. For this reason, the capacity of ambitious politicians is necessary to politicize the country's grievances and make them salient. To do this, consistent with the ideational approach of populism, populist politicians often present the country's problems as a struggle between the people and a corrupt elite. Such populist rhetoric or framing has several functions. First, it fosters a common in-group identity that makes citizens feel identified as part of the "people" (Hawkins and Rovira, 2017), beyond their particular interests (for example, class consciousness or religion). Second, populist rhetoric or framing conveys the perception of the existence of a collusion among the corrupt elite against the interests of the "people" (Hawkins *et al.*, 2018). And third, this rhetoric also identifies people as honest and virtuous and, therefore, as victims of the corrupt elites that act in detriment to their best interests. As Hameleers *et al.* (2016) explains, populism inherently blames elites for negative events and completely absolves the people.

Various studies have additionally found that a populist framing that refers to an anti-establishment identity represents fertile ground for the emergence of populist attitudes (Melendez and Rovira, 2017). It is important to note that the literature of populism tends to assume that the electorate effectively believes in the existence of that corrupt elite that conspires against the will of the people, but few studies have empirically verified such belief regarding the elite. In this sense, in order to

study populist activation of the electorate, it is necessary to identify that said framing effectively permeates the electorate and, in turn, interacts with the populist attitudes of voters. Therefore, the second hypothesis of this study is the following:

H2 (populist framing). The greater the degree of populist attitudes among voters, the greater the probability of believing in a corrupt elite.

Up to this point, we have exclusively referred to the perceptual effect of populist attitudes, without necessarily leading to political behavior. The context and framing through which political reality is interpreted are necessary but not sufficient conditions to effectively mobilize populist attitudes electorally. For this purpose, it is necessary that there be anger among the electorate so that these populist grievances and attitudes can be activated (Hawkins *et al.*, 2018). It is possible that there are voters who have a negative evaluation of the country's situation and even consider that the elite is colluding, but that do not necessarily have a motivation to translate these variables into electoral mobilization. In this sense, as previously suggested and consistent with the literature in participation, anger represents a central variable that allows translating populist attitudes into political behavior.

Anger in politics tends to increase the political participation of individuals (Valentino *et al.*, 2011; Weber, 2013), including protest (Van Troost *et al.*, 2013), while other types of emotions, such as fear or anxiety, makes individuals more risk-averse and open to compromise (Mackuen *et al.*, 2010). In this case, populism uses emotions to assign blame and anger motivates action against the elites responsible for failures in a country. As Rico *et al.* (2017) explain, anger is also accompanied by a normative judgment that encourages a response from those who feel aggravated. And moreover, the populist inclination to divide society into two antagonistic groups necessarily makes anger polarizing and facilitates responsibility attribution, which also motivates action against elites (Arceneaux, 2003; Javeline, 2003). In this sense, the third set of hypothesis of this study is the following:

H3a (anger). The greater the degree of populist attitudes among voters, the greater the probability of reporting more anger about the country's situation.

H3b (mobilization). The greater the degree of populist attitudes among voters, the greater the probability of their mobilization.

Finally, on the side of political demand, there is a variable that will allow the translation of populist rhetoric and anger into electoral behavior, but which has been scanty studied in the literature on populism: partisanship. The most important variable to understand voting behavior is partisanship, as it constitutes the filter through which voters give meaning to the political world (Green, Palmquist and Schickler, 2004; Lewis-Beck *et al.*, 2008). Moreover, partisanship is an information

filter that makes voters absorb information in a biased way: voters often accept information that is consistent with their political predispositions and reject information that is contrary to their way of understanding the political world (Lodge and Hamill, 1986; Kuklinski and Hurley, 1994; Zaller, 1992).

Following recent studies in Latin America that find that partisanship is stronger than previous analyses have assumed (Baker and Renno, 2019; Castro Cornejo, 2019; Lupu, 2015), this study argues that voters' partisan attachments constitute a moderator that will allow or will reduce the likelihood that voters will accept populist rhetoric. This means that even if voters have a similar level of populist attitudes, the activation of those attitudes will be conditioned by partisanship. For the same reason, voters who share partisanship with the populist candidate participating in a given election are more likely to accept a populist framing that considers that there is a corrupt elite and that the situation in the country is very serious. Likewise, these voters will be more likely to mobilize electorally, increasing their anger and turnout in the election. In contrast, voters who do not share the partisanship of the populist candidate—even those with a high degree of populist attitudes—will reject a populist framing and will not mobilize electorally based on populist rhetoric or attitudes.

H4a (co-partisans). Voters who share partisanship with a populist candidate are more likely to accept a populist framing and mobilize electorally.

H4b (out-partisans). Voters who do not share partisanship with a populist candidate are less likely to accept a populist framing and mobilize electorally.

In summary, we argue that populist attitudes translate into electoral mobilization when there is an ideal context to politicize the grievances suffered by voters, which in turn is exploited through an effective rhetoric that persuades an angry electorate to mobilize against the political establishment. However, depending on their partisanship, voters will have a different response to populist framing. For the evaluation of this argument, we focus on the 2018 presidential election in Mexico, where the winning candidate relied on populist framing consistent with the ideational approach, apparently benefiting electorally from the electorate's activation of populist attitudes.

THE "POWER MAFIA" AND POPULIST ACTIVATION IN MEXICO

Before the 2018 presidential election, the party system in Mexico was one of the most stable in Latin America (Mainwaring, 2018).² Since the transition to democracy in 1997, the PRI, the PAN, and the PRD had remained the main parties in Mexico.

²For the period 1990-2015, the party systems of Mexico, Uruguay, the Dominican Republic, and Chile registered almost perfect stability in the main contenders in their presidential elections. When additional indicators (interparty electoral competition and stability of the parties' ideological positions) are added, Uruguay, Mexico, and Chile are the most stable party systems in Latin America (Mainwaring, 2018).

However, the 2018 presidential election represents a break with the traditional party system. Morena and its candidate, López Obrador, managed to win the country's presidency with 53 per cent of the votes and the legislative majority together with its partisan allies in the Chamber of Deputies and Senate.

López Obrador had already been a presidential candidate in 2006 as a PRD candidate when he lost the election to Felipe Calderón, the candidate for the National Action Party (PAN), by less than one per cent of the vote share. At the time, López Obrador argued that a corrupt elite, the so-called “*mafia del poder*” (power mafia), had swindled the presidency away from him. This mafia, which, according to López Obrador's perspective, is composed of PAN and PRI politicians and businessmen, is the cause of poverty in Mexico and the state of “national disaster” resulting from rampant corruption and unbridled neoliberalism in the nation during the last 30 years. In 2012, when López Obrador lost by just over five points to the PRI candidate—Enrique Peña Nieto—the former denounced the electoral result again as a fraud, this time, organized by the power mafia to buy votes, on a massive scale, in support of the PRI campaign.

After the 2012 presidential elections, relations between López Obrador and his party deteriorated markedly after the PRD's decision to join the “Pact for Mexico” (“Pacto por México”, in Spanish)—with the participation of the PAN and the PRI—which sought to create an understanding between political forces to approve various structural reforms in Congress. López Obrador denounced the PRD for betraying its militants by joining the same “power mafia” as the “PRIAN”, the term he uses colloquially to conflate the PRI and the PAN. Following his resignation from the PRD, López Obrador founded, along with his political allies, a personalist party—the National Regeneration Movement or Morena—which backed his third bid for the presidency. In 2018, his campaign focused primarily on denouncing the corruption of the PRI and PAN governments, energizing the internal market, and repealing the neoliberal structural reforms approved by the “Pact for Mexico” during the six-year term of Enrique Peña Nieto.

Consistent with the ideational approach of populism, López Obrador seems to divide society in two. On the one hand, in López Obrador's view, “the people” are virtuous as evidenced by his comments that “the greatest wealth of Mexico is the honesty of its people”³ and that his movement is built on “the conviction that the people are good—they are honest” (Páramo, 2020). At the same time, the “power mafia”⁴ is

³ “La mayor riqueza de México es la honestidad de su pueblo. Conferencia de prensa matutina”, February 19, 2019. Available at: <https://lopezobrador.org.mx/2019/02/19/la-mayor-riqueza-de-mexico-es-la-honestidad-de-su-pueblo-conferencia-de-prensa-matutina/> [accessed on: December 10, 2019].

⁴ Populist framing is usually adapted to the local context. For example, Hugo Chávez named the corrupt elite in his country the “rancid oligarchy”. Pablo Iglesias in Spain often denounces the corrupt elite as “the caste”.

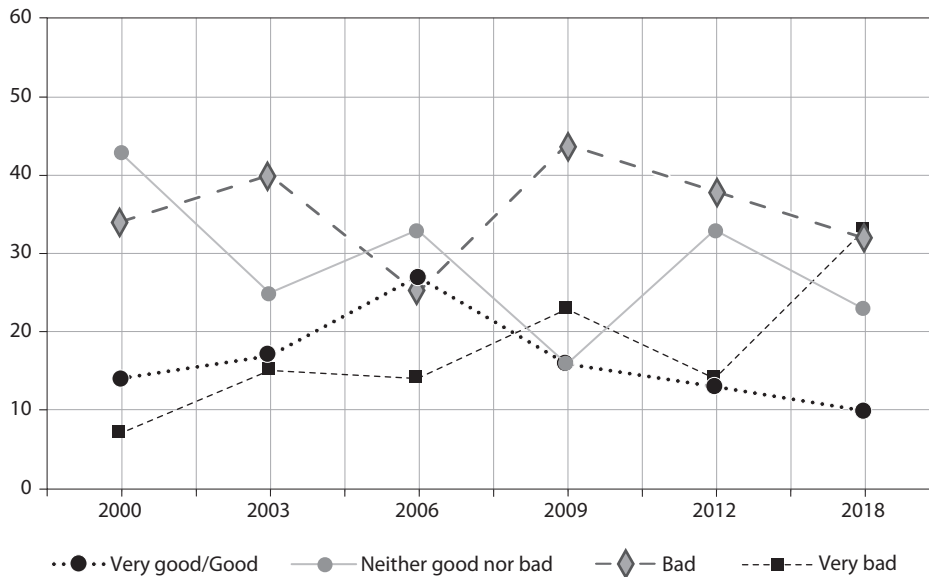
the framing that López Obrador has used to label the corrupt elites who, from his perspective, “believe they own the country” and have conspired among themselves since 1982, when the country passed through a neoliberal phase, which reached its peak during the presidency of Carlos Salinas de Gortari, beginning in 1988. From his perspective, “Salinas handed over the nation’s wealth” to a small number of entrepreneurs who have become real masters of the country, as he asserted in his first presidential campaign in 2006:

Let’s bring up those on the bottom, and bring down those on top. What we have to do is unite the people; this is a fight that must be taken up by all Mexicans to defend our interests, against a group that has perpetuated its stranglehold on power and has ruined Mexico. Those at the top do not want to give up power. They are not satisfied. They want to continue devouring the country, but enough is enough. Now it is the people’s turn. It is time for the people to rule this country in a way that benefits the people. Money and power will never win over the dignity and moral character of our people, and we will demonstrate this on July 2 (Bruhn, 2012).

Similar to his rhetoric from the 2006 presidential campaign (Bruhn, 2012), López Obrador in 2018 denounced the PAN, the PRI, and the political establishment as part of a “power mafia” that has impoverished the country with its neoliberal policies and its corruption. It is important to note that the belief that there is a corrupt elite ruling Mexico is not limited only to López Obrador’s rhetoric but has also spread to a significant proportion of the electorate. In fact, according to the CIDE-CSES, 2018 National Electoral Study, 38 per cent of voters in Mexico believe that it is “very true” that there is a “power mafia made up of the PRI, PAN, and businessmen”, while an additional 32 per cent consider this perception to be “somewhat true” (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020). The prevalence of this perception then becomes fertile ground for populist mobilization.

Likewise, unlike 2006, the 2018 situation in Mexico represented an ideal context to mobilize voters through populist framing. According to the CIDE-CSES, 2018 National Electoral Study, the Mexican electorate was quite critical of the situation in the country, registering the most negative results since the study was first conducted in 1997: two thirds considered that the economic situation of the country was worse than in the previous government (see Figure 1). Likewise, the president’s approval ratings are the lowest recorded by the CSES: only 18 per cent of voters approved of the way Enrique Peña Nieto governed, well below previous presidents such as Vicente Fox (67%) and Felipe Calderón (54%; CSES, 2018). At the same time, most voters reported being angry with the country’s situation. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means “not angry” and 10 “very angry”, the average is 7.1 (7.5 among independent voters; 7.2 among voters who identify with Morena; 6.8 among PAN members; 6.7 among PRI members; Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020).

FIGURE 1. Evaluation of the country’s economic situation (2000–2018)



Source: National Electoral Study, CIDE-CSES, 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020).

The Mexican electorate is also increasingly critical of the party system resulting from the transition to democracy. According to the same National Electoral Study (CIDE-CSES), at the beginning of the 2018 presidential campaign, 52 per cent of voters expressed that they would never vote for the PRI and 23 per cent that they would never vote for the PAN, while only 11 per cent stated that they would never vote for Morena. Moreover, 46 per cent of voters considered that the PAN, the PRI, and the PRD represented “the same thing”.⁵ Therefore, López Obrador had an ideal context to politicize and electorally mobilize the grievances suffered by voters, which he took advantage of through effective framing that rhetorically denounced corrupt elites as culpable of all the country’s ills.

POPULIST ATTITUDES OF THE ELECTORATE IN MEXICO: EMPIRICAL STRATEGY

To measure populist demand among voters, this work is based on the 2018 CIDE-CSES National Electoral Study, which is part of the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems*. The study was carried out as a panel survey with four waves of the same sample of voters. This work focuses on the questions that were measured in the first wave⁶ that had 2 600 interviews with a representativeness at the national level. Module 5 of the CSES that was conducted in this edition included a battery of ques-

⁵ Forty-six per cent considered that it was true that the “PAN, PRI, and PRD represent the same thing”; 36 per cent considered such a conflation as false; and 11 per cent, neither true nor false.

⁶ The first wave of this study was raised between May 26 and June 4, 2018.

TABLE 1. Variables that make up the populist attitudes index (first wave)

“Tell me if you totally agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree ...”	Totally agree (percentage)
Most politicians don’t care about the people	36
Politicians are the main problem in Mexico	35
The people, not the politicians, should make our most important policy decisions	31
Most politicians only care about the interests of the rich and powerful	37

Source: National Electoral Study, CIDE-CSES, 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020).

tions consistent with the ideational approach to measure the populist attitudes of voters in various countries of the world. Based on a factor analysis, the questions that registered a common latent dimension of populism were evaluated (Table 1 includes the questions that were part of the index).⁷ Subsequently, an additive index was constructed with those that were part of the populism dimension. This index reports a high degree of reliability based on Cronbach’s alpha (0.72). Subsequently, the index was rescaled from 0 to 1 to facilitate its interpretation.

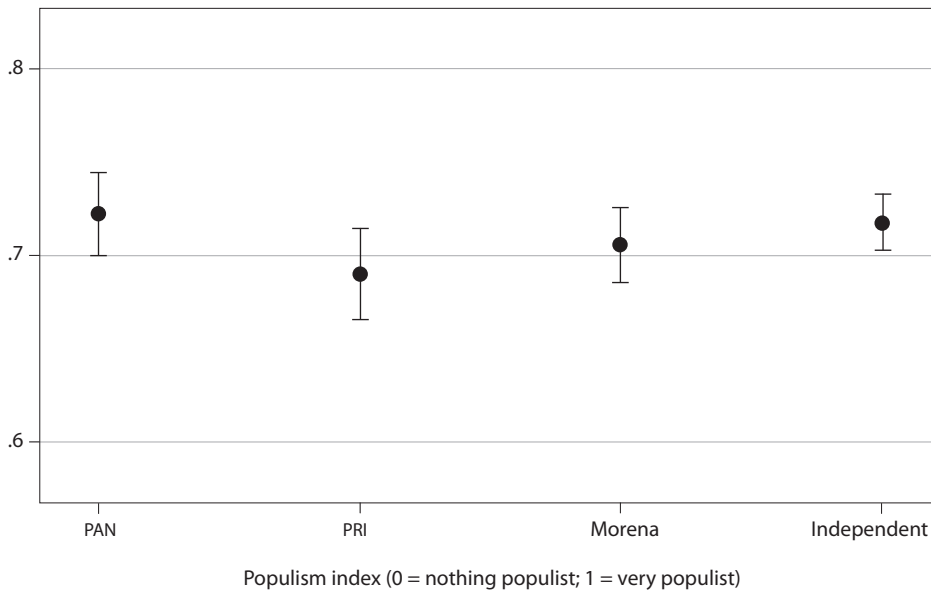
Figure 2 highlights that the level of populist attitudes among the electorate is quite high: 0.70 on a scale that goes from 0 to 1.⁸ Likewise, as Table A1 in the Appendix shows, the level of populism is not significantly different among voters across partisan groups: not only PAN and PRI partisans (henceforth *panistas* and *priistas*, respectively), but also Morena voters (henceforth *morenistas*) and independents have a high level of populist attitudes. *Panistas* and independent voters tend to report slightly more populist attitudes, but the magnitude is neither statistically ($p > 0.05$) nor substantively significant (Figure 2, Table A1 in the Appendix). As explained earlier, this study argues that populist attitudes do not in themselves translate into electoral behavior. As discussed further below, voters, depending on their partisanship, will have a different response to populist rhetoric as we discuss in the next section.

The analysis also highlights that no socioeconomic variable is a significant predictor of a high level of populist attitudes. Neither the gender of the respondent, nor the type of electoral area they live in (rural or urban) or their civil status are

⁷The following questions were excluded because they did not belong to the same common latent dimension: “When politicians agree on a negotiation, making concessions, they are actually selling their principles”; “Most politicians can be trusted”; and “Having a strong leader in government is good for Mexico, even if this leader violates some laws to get things done”.

⁸Given the variation in the operationalization of populism in the literature, it is difficult to establish whether it is at a higher level than the average for the electorate of other countries. In each study, operationalization tends to vary, as does the phrasing of the questions.

FIGURE 2. Populist attitudes of the electorate by partisanship



Source: National Electoral Study, CIDE-CSES, 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020). *Note:* dependent variable = populism index (from 0 to 1).

variables associated with their level of populist attitudes. Only the educational level and employment status of voters reaches a statistically significant relationship, but the magnitude is not particularly large: university-educated voters report 4 percentage points more than those with only an elementary school education ($p < 0.05$), while unemployed voters report 6 percentage points less than employed voters ($p < 0.05$). This finding is consistent with recent works that show that the electoral bases of populist parties are not concentrated in a specific socioeconomic group (Rooduijn, 2018) and that, in general, socioeconomic variables tend to have little explanatory power in the variance of populist attitudes (Ivarsflaten, 2008).

To evaluate the three conditions for populist activation of the electorate, the analysis relies on various questions included in the National Electoral Study (see Table 2). First, to analyze voters’ evaluations of the situation in Mexico (context), we based our work on the questions that measure evaluation of the country’s situation regarding the economy, security, and corruption. To analyze the populist framing, we inquired whether voters consider the existence of the power mafia to be true or false. Finally, to analyze the populist mobilization, we measured the levels of voters’ anger over the situation in the country as well as the probability said voters would participate on election day (turnout). Table A2 in the Appendix reports the descriptive statistics of the variables included in this study. To measure partisanship, we rely on the following question from the National Electoral Study:

TABLE 2. Populist activation of the electorate

Assessment of the situation in Mexico (Context)	1. Would you say that, during the last twelve months, the economic situation in Mexico has improved, remained the same, or worsened? 2. Would you say that, during the last twelve months, the security situation in Mexico has improved, remained the same, or worsened? 3. Regarding the previous six-year term, do you believe that corruption in Mexico has increased, is the same as always, or has decreased or do you believe there is no corruption?
Corrupt elite (Framing)	4. Based on what you know, how true or false is it that... there is a “power mafia” made up of businessmen and politicians?
Anger and participation (Mobilization)	5. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means not at all angry and 10 very angry, how angry are you about the current situation in the country? 6. How sure are you that you will vote in the next presidential elections: totally sure, fairly sure, somewhat sure, fairly unsure, or completely?

Source: National Electoral Study, CIDE-CSES, 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020).

“Regardless of the party you have voted for or plan to vote for, do you normally consider yourself *panista*, *priista*, *perredista* (PRD constituent), or do you identify with Morena or some other party?” In the first wave of the panel survey, partisanship is made up as follows: Morena (22%), PAN (17%), PRI (14%), other parties (6%), independent voters (39%), do not know / did not answer (1%). Therefore, we have enough observations to separate the models across partisan groups.

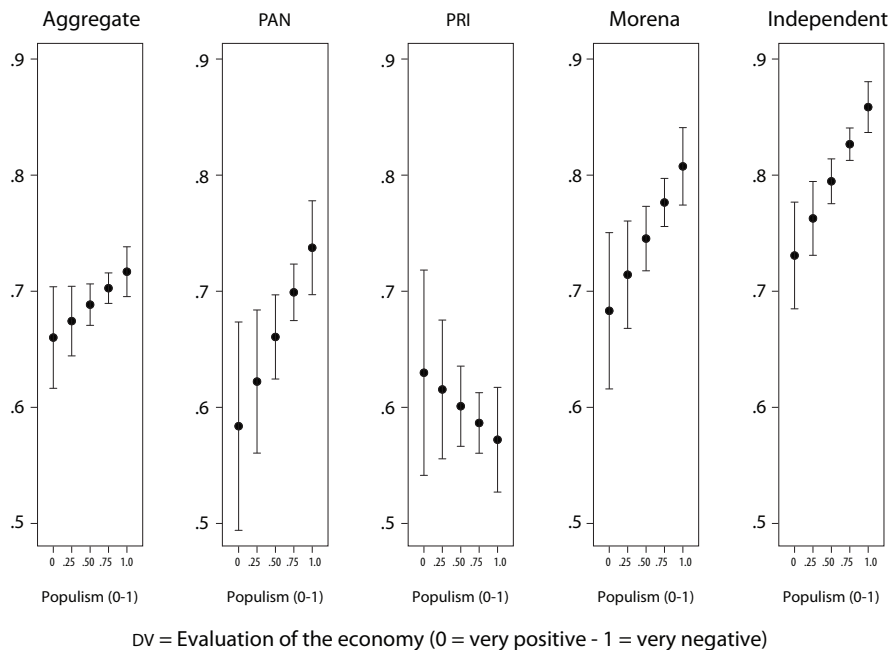
The models that we present in the following section include the control variables that we list below, in order to ensure the robustness of our analysis, as well as to show that our results are not derived from omitted variables. We include socio-economic variables such as age, gender, level of education, employment status, and the type of electoral area where the interviewee lives (rural, urban, and mixed) since it is possible that it is not their populist attitudes but a position of vulnerability what motivates the respondent to develop a negative evaluation of the economy, security, and corruption and consider that there is an elite that colludes against the people. Likewise, the models contain political variables such as presidential approval, the opinion of the interviewees about the PAN, PRI, PRD, and Morena (favorability from 0 to 10), as well as the strength of partisanship (weak/strong partisan),⁹ to be sure that populism is the factor that motivates negative evaluations or belief in the power mafia and that it is not the result of the perception about the party system or the government of president Enrique Peña Nieto.

⁹ “On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means that you don’t like that party at all and 10 means that you really like it, how would you rate (name of the party)?”; “In general, do you agree or disagree with the way President Enrique Peña Nieto has governed?”

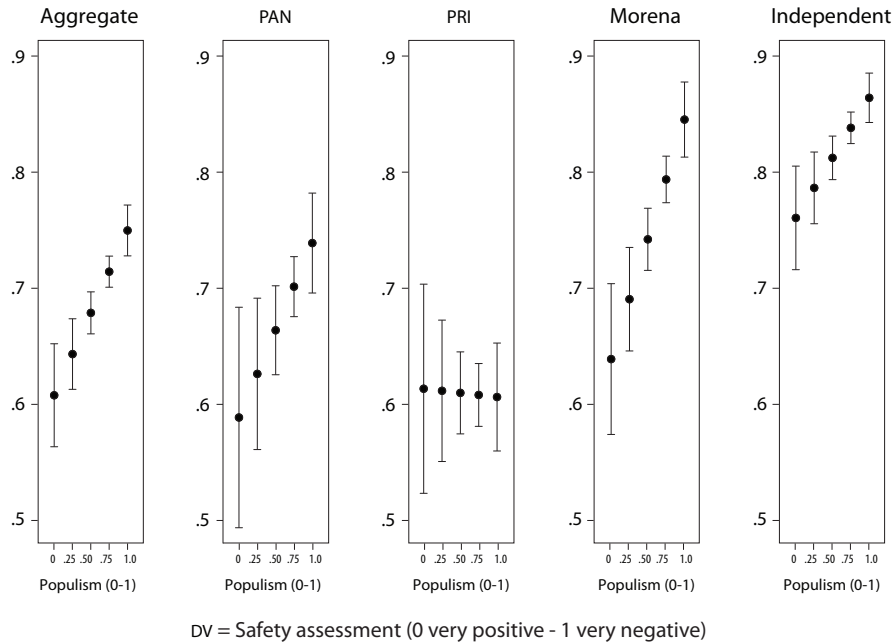
RESULTS

In what follows, we present the results of our ordinary least squares (OLS) models, which, consistent with the argument of this research, are displayed in aggregate terms and across partisan groups. As previously discussed, populist attitudes are expected to have a different effect on each partisan group. First, we assess the context that makes populist activation of the electorate possible based on the assessment that voters make of the country’s situation, in particular on the state of the economy, public security, and corruption. In the case of the economy (Figure 3, Table A3 in the Appendix), a statistically significant relationship is observed between populist attitudes and the evaluation of the economy in the aggregate ($p < 0.01$). However, when the analysis separates voters by partisanship, there is a relevant substantive variation, which the aggregate analysis tends to hide. For example, among *panistas*, *morenistas*, and independents, evaluations of the economy are more negative as populist attitudes increase. The relationship is statistically and substantially significant ($p < 0.01$) among *morenistas*, for whom the probability of reporting a negative evaluation of the economy increases by about 15 per cent (from 0.67 to 0.81) when the populist attitudes index increases from 0 to 1. Among independents, the magnitude is quite similar (from 0.73 to 0.87, $p < 0.01$), while in the case of the PAN it increases

FIGURE 3. Negative evaluations of the economy and populist attitudes



Source: National Electoral Study, CIDE-CSES, 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020). Note: In Table A3 in the Appendix we report the OLS models including control variables.

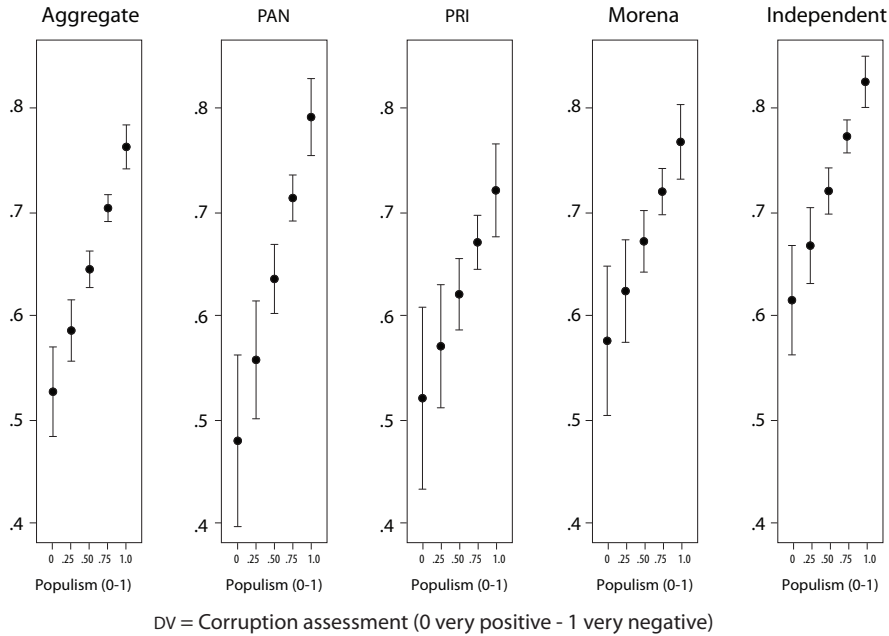
FIGURE 4. Evaluations of security and populist attitudes

Source: National Electoral Study, CIDE-CSES, 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020). Note: In Table A4 in the Appendix, we report the OLS models including control variables.

from 0.58 to 0.73 ($p < 0.05$). On the contrary, among *priistas*, there is no relation between the evaluation of the economy and its populist attitudes ($p > 0.05$). These results are robust even when socio-economic and political variables are included in the models as seen in Table A3 in the Appendix. In the case of public security, quite similar results are recorded (Figure 4, Table A4 in the Appendix). While the populist attitudes of *panistas* ($p < 0.05$), *morenistas* ($p < 0.01$), and independents ($p < 0.01$) are associated with a negative evaluation of the security situation, among *priistas* no statistically significant relationship is reported between the two variables ($p > 0.05$). Only in the case of the perception of corruption (Figure 5, Table A5 in the Appendix), there is a significant relationship between populist attitudes and evaluations of the country's situation both in the aggregate and across partisan groups.

Overall, there are differences in the perception of the country's situation according to voters' partisanship, which is consistent with the argument of this study. Among *priistas*, except for the perception of corruption, populist attitudes do not exacerbate a negative evaluation of the country's situation. In the case of the *panistas*, *morenistas*, or independents, the first necessary condition for populist mobilization is present: very critical evaluations of the situation in the country and which are exacerbated by populist attitudes (Hypothesis 1). It is important to emphasize that

FIGURE 5. Evaluations of corruption and populist attitudes

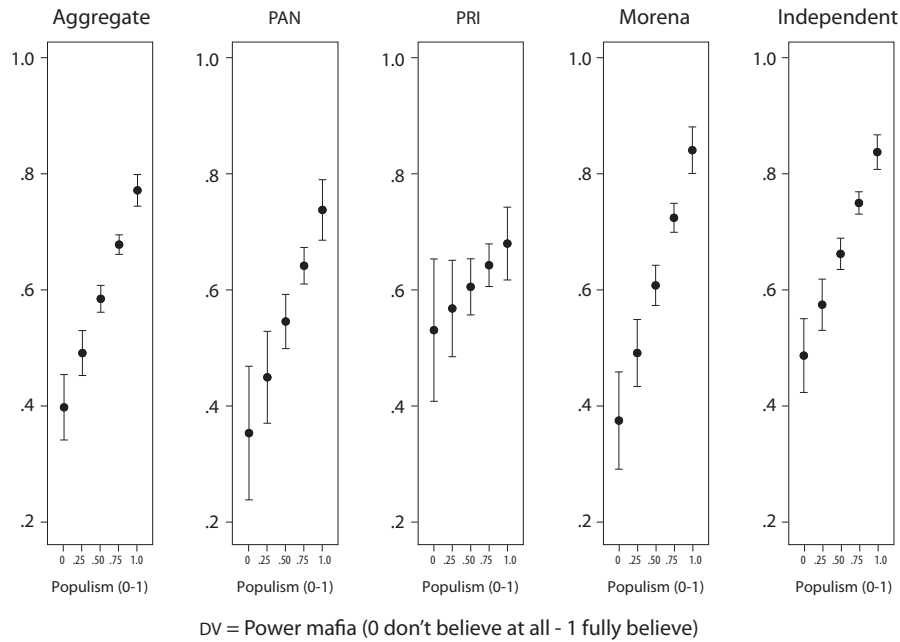


Source: National Electoral Study, CIDE-CSES, 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020). Note: In Table A5 in the Appendix, we report the OLS models including control variables.

this difference is found despite the fact that the *priistas*, *panistas*, *morenistas*, and independents have a very similar level of populist attitudes (Figure 2). However, consistent with Hypothesis 4, populist attitudes have a differentiated role in this first condition between *priistas* and other partisan groups.

A second condition that the literature argues occurs in the process of activating populist attitudes refers to the voters’ reception of a populist framing regarding the existence of a corrupt elite, which has rarely been measured in studies on populist demand among the electorate. In particular, this study analyzes the perception of the existence of a “power mafia” within the electorate. The aggregate results show that there is a significant relationship between the populist attitudes of the voters and the belief that the “power mafia” exists ($p < 0.01$) (Figure 6, Table A6 in the Appendix), but again we see some degree of variation across partisan groups. As the level of populist attitudes among *panistas*, *morenistas*, and independents increases, the belief in the “power mafia” increases substantially as well. For example, among *morenistas*, it increases from 0.38 to 0.85, a change of almost 50 percentage points ($p < 0.01$). This result is robust even when controlling with political variables such as presidential approval and the opinion of the interviewees on the political parties, as well as strength of partisanship (Table A6 in the Appendix). The result is particu-

FIGURE 6. Power mafia and populist attitudes

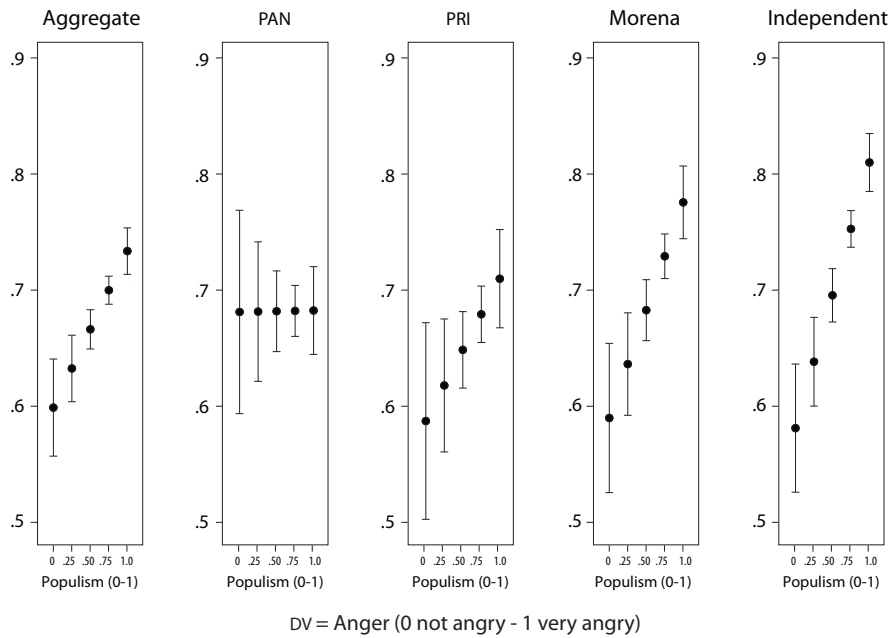


Source: National Electoral Study, CIDE-CSES, 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020). Note: In Table A6 in the Appendix, we report the OLS models including control variables.

larly interesting among *panistas*, among whom belief in a “power mafia” increases from 0.37 to 0.76 as their populist attitudes increase ($p < 0.01$). Among *panistas*, populist framing also seems to be successful despite the fact that, according to López Obrador, various PAN politicians are part of the “power mafia” that has impoverished the country. However, it is possible that *panistas* have their own definition of this “power mafia”, distinct from López Obrador’s interpretation, which might explain why a significant proportion of *panistas* believes that there is such a mafia in Mexico.¹⁰ Among *pristas*, again, there is no relationship between populist attitudes and belief in the existence of a corrupt elite. In summary, we find that the second requirement for populist mobilization is registered among *panistas*, *morenistas*, and independents, but not among *pristas* (Hypothesis 2), which again highlights the important role of partisanship as a moderator of the relationship between populist and political attitudes (Hypothesis 4), in this particular case, of belief in a corrupt elite.

¹⁰ Although analysis of the concept of “power mafia” among *panistas* is beyond the scope of this work, it is possible to propose that the resonance of this concept has its origin, in part, in the history of the PAN’s electoral struggle as political opposition to the PRI and the former’s own post-election protests in the 1990s (Eisenstadt, 2003).

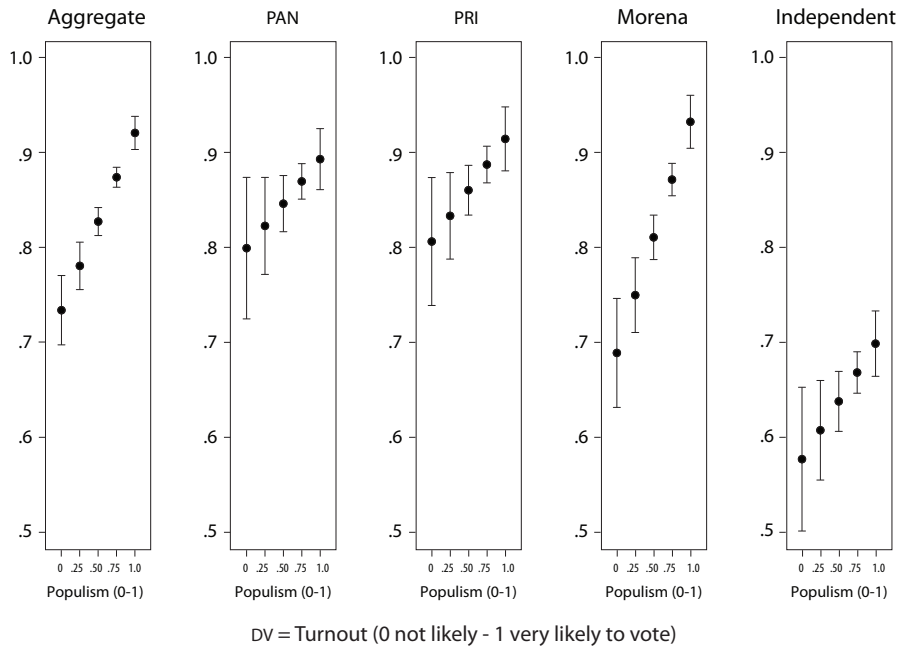
FIGURE 7. Anger and populist attitudes



Source: National Electoral Study, CIDE-CSES, 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020). Note: In Table A7 in the Appendix, we report the OLS models including control variables.

So far, there are three groups of voters reporting two of the three conditions necessary for populist activation: *panistas*, *morenistas*, and independents. Next is the third necessary condition for the electoral activation of populist attitudes and which refers to the anger of voters and their subsequent electoral participation. In other words, not only do voters need to assess the country’s situation (context) poorly or belief in a corrupt elite (framing); these perceptions must also translate into anger and turnout (mobilization). As reported in Figure 7, in the aggregate, populist attitudes are significantly associated with voters’ anger, but this result is only recorded among *morenistas* and independents ($p < 0.01$, Figure 7, Table A7 in the Appendix) and does not hold true among *panistas* and *priistas*, for whom there is no significant relationship ($p > 0.05$). Moreover, between *morenistas* and independents there is a statistically significant relationship between populist attitudes and the probability of voter turnout. Again, populist attitudes do not make the voting among *panistas* and *priistas* more likely ($p > 0.05$, Hypothesis 3b, Figure 8). In this sense, only among *morenistas* and independents are the three conditions for populist activation present and in accordance with the hypotheses of this study (see summary in Table 3). Only these two partisan groups translate their populist attitudes into mobilization and are not limited to a negative perception of the situation in the country and the existence of a corrupt elite.

FIGURE 8. Participation and populist attitudes



Source: National Electoral Study, CIDE-CSES, 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020). Note: In Table A8 in the Appendix, we report the OLS models including control variables.

TABLE 3. The three requirements for populist activation ($p < 0.05$)

	Context			Rhetoric	Mobilization	
	Economy	Security	Corruption	Corrupt Elite	Anger	Participation
Priistas	—	—	✓	—	—	—
Panistas	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	—
Morena	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Independents	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: National Electoral Study, CIDE-CSES, 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020).

The previous results corroborate the hypotheses of this study: among voters who identify with Morena and independents, the populist attitudes of the electorate exacerbate a negative evaluation of the situation in the country, the belief in a corrupt elite, and the anger over the country’s situation, which constitute the three conditions necessary for the populist activation of the electorate. This activation is not registered among *priistas* who do not meet any conditions, despite showing a similar level of populist attitudes as *morenistas* and independents. Among *panistas*,

only two of the three conditions are met, which are limited to the negative perception of the situation in the country and the belief in corrupt elites forming a “power mafia”, but do not display anger or electoral participation (Table 3). Consistent with the literature on political behavior, partisanship represents a moderator, as it is *morenistas* who accept López Obrador’s populist framing, which is consistent with their political predispositions. One of the successes of López Obrador’s candidacy is that his rhetoric also succeeded among independent voters who also met all three conditions and were activated by López Obrador’s populist framing.¹¹ Therefore, it is not entirely surprising that, also according to the National Electoral Study, regarding voting intention, the majority of independent voters supported López Obrador during the presidential campaign.¹² The results that we reported in the previous paragraphs are based on the first wave of the panel survey that was conducted before election day. If, as the argument of this article holds, populist attitudes are activated by the context and by ambitious elites using a populist framing, such attitudes should exhibit an increase during the campaign, followed by a decrease after the elections, since the context changed radically after the victory of Morena’s candidate, López Obrador. In other words, while populist attitudes may be stable among voters, the connection those attitudes have to other variables—for example, the evaluation of the country’s situation, the belief in a corrupt elite, or anger—should be stronger during the campaign, given the role of political elites (López Obrador’s populist framing) that would reinforce this connection. As Zaller (1992) maintains, political opinions are a marriage of political predispositions of voters and the signals sent by political elites, making political campaigns a key moment for the candidates’ message. This process is very similar to that described by Gelman and King (1992) and which activates partisanship during political campaigns. As election day approaches, the connection between partisanship and voting intention grows stronger, so that by the end of the campaign the vast majority of partisans vote for their party’s candidate.

Although we do not have pre-campaign data to estimate the stability of the connection between populist attitudes and political attitudes before the electoral campaign, Table 4 reports the statistical significance of the same models presented in the preceding paragraphs, but with data that measures the context, rhetoric, and mobilization during the third wave of the panel survey that was conducted *after* the

¹¹ According to the CIDE-CSES, 2018 survey, in the first wave, 55 per cent of those who declared themselves independents expressed their intention to vote for López Obrador. In the third wave, 57 per cent declared that they voted for López Obrador.

¹² Although it is not the central question of this article, an important point is to understand how the model described in this work (context, framing, mobilization, and partisanship) is translated in terms of voting intention. To do this, Figure A1 in the Appendix reports the probability of voting according to different types of context assessments, belief in a corrupt elite, anger, and partisanship.

TABLE 4. Statistical significance before and after the presidential campaign

		Morena		Independents	
		Pre-electoral	Post-electoral	Pre-electoral	Post-electoral
Context	Economy	***	Not significant	***	Not significant
	Security	***	Not significant	***	**
	Corruption	***	Not significant	***	***
Framing	Power mafia	***	***	***	***
Mobilization	Anger	***	Not significant	***	Not significant
	Participation	**	Not significant	**	Not significant

Source: National Electoral Study, CIDE-CSES, 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020). *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$.

election. Unlike the previous results, after the election in which López Obrador won the presidency, the populist attitudes of voters are a less important predictor than before election day. Among voters that identify with Morena, populist attitudes practically lose predictive power in each item studied in this article—they only maintain a predictive power in relation to the belief in the power mafia (see Table 4). It should be noted that this change is not due to change in partisanship between the first and third waves of the survey, since the sample is restricted to respondents who self-identify as *morenistas* during the first wave. Although the effect is not as marked among independents (for context and framing, the statistical significance remains), populist attitudes are also less predictive of the different items analyzed in this study.

These data suggest that populist attitudes seem to have been deactivated once the context changes after the historic result of the presidential election, and this effect is particularly important among people who share partisanship with López Obrador. In fact, the connection between these variables is not the only variable that tends to decrease; even among *morenistas*, the belief in a power mafia and anger over the country's situation tends to decrease with respect to the start of the campaign and even the evaluations of the situation in Mexico are somewhat more favorable. For example, the percentage of voters who believe it is “very true” that there is a power mafia fell from 44 to 28 per cent, while anger over the situation in the country decreased from 7.2 to 6.8 (on a scale from 0 to 10) between the first and third waves of the poll among voters who identified with Morena in the first wave. As discussed earlier, the context that makes populist activation of the electorate possible is not permanent, but the situation of the country and the perception that citizens have about it are essential in this process.

DISCUSSION

This work contributes to an understanding of the success of Andrés Manuel López Obrador's campaign in 2018, his third bid for the Mexican presidency. The populist framing that divides Mexican society in two—the “people” vs. the “power mafia”—had moderate success in 2006 and 2012, when López Obrador finished in second place. It was not until 2018 that conditions were particularly conducive to the success of his candidacy and, specifically, to López Obrador's populist framing. Unlike the candidate's first two presidential campaigns, this time the electorate found itself aggrieved and angry at the country's situation, and he successfully mobilized voters to take their grievances to the polls, securing a victory that represents the breakdown of a party system installed at the beginning of the transition to democracy in Mexico.

This work also contributes to the literature on populism, particularly on the demand side. Firstly, unlike previous studies that tend to focus on the conditions that allow populist activation of the electorate in isolation, our article analyzes three conditions that make populist activation of the electorate possible. In this article, we find that populism requires an enabling context for populist activation of voters to be possible. It is also necessary that voters feel aggrieved by their country's situation. And given that context, the capacity of ambitious politicians is equally necessary to make such grievance salient. In this case, López Obrador activated populist attitudes among *morenistas* and independent voters. Second, this study also contributes to the populism literature by including a variable that is rarely analyzed but that moderates the relationship between populist attitudes and voting behavior, namely partisanship. Specifically, we find that not all voters are mobilized equally in response to populist framing, even if they register a similar level of populist attitudes. Voters' partisanship constitutes an information filter that makes it more likely that they will accept populist framing and mobilize, as long as this framing is consistent with their political predispositions.

There are several aspects that this study has not investigated that could be relevant to understanding the conditions conducive to populist activation. For example, future studies should analyze in depth the moderating role of partisanship. While our theory proposes that partisanship is a political predisposition that conditions voters' attitudes and electoral behavior—consistent with Lupu (2015)—some voters may self-identify with Morena (a personalist party-movement) because they have populist attitudes and not because partisan self-identification is a political predisposition that precedes such populist attitudes. However, our results suggest that this is not the case. First, the correlation between populist attitudes and self-identification with Morena is not significantly different from correlation with other parties (PAN, PRI, and independents). Likewise, the fact that the relationship between populism, self-identification with Morena, and the three conditions for pop-

ulist mobilization (context, framing, and anger) decreased after Election Day also suggests that self-identification with Morena and populist attitudes are empirically and conceptually distinct phenomena. These results are not entirely surprising given that although Morena is a new party, it inherited the political brand of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who has led the political opposition in Mexico since 2000 and whose 2018 presidential campaign was his third bid for office. Now, if this research was replicated in countries with less institutionalized party systems (Mainwaring, 2018) in which new political parties emerge in each electoral period or outsider candidates pursue populist mobilization of the electorate, it is possible that both the populist attitudes and political self-identification with those parties are conceptually and empirically intertwined.

Another topic that future studies could analyze further is context. Firstly, it is possible that a negative perception of the country's situation may increase populist attitudes, rather than populist attitudes exacerbating a negative perception of context, as our article argues, based on the populism literature. If such a possibility is indeed the case, future studies may explore whether these two variables—context and populist attitudes—mutually reinforce each other or, alternatively, isolate the effect each variable has on electoral mobilization. Likewise, although our work shows that there was fertile ground for populist mobilization given the negative evaluations of the economy, security, and corruption in the 2018 presidential election in Mexico, future studies may ask which particular issue constitutes the most important predictor for mobilization of López Obrador's voters. As Altamirano and Ley find in this special volume, it seems that the economy and security, rather than corruption, are the most important dimensions to understand López Obrador's victory in terms of voting intention. This result is especially interesting given the centrality of López Obrador's discourse denouncing the corruption of the PAN and PRI governments throughout his electoral campaign. Finally, something similar should be investigated in future works regarding voters' anger. It is possible that there are different reasons why voters are angry about the situation in the country. If this is the case, it may be that identifying the nature of voters' anger—which could be motivated by various issues such as representation deficits or perceived systemic corruption—may help understand the conditions under which voters will be more or less supportive of or likely to be activated by a populist candidate. **P**

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APPENDIX

TABLE A1. OLS Model

Dependent variable = Index of populist attitudes (0-1)

Gender: woman	-0.01 (0.01)
Education: elementary	-0.01 (0.01)
Education: high school	-0.01 (0.01)
Education: college+	0.04** (0.02)
PID: PAN	0.03 (0.02)
PID: Morena	0.02 (0.02)
PID: Independent	0.03 (0.01)
Electoral precinct: mixed	-0.01 (0.02)
Electoral precinct: urban	0.01 (0.01)
Married: widow	-0.03 (0.02)
Married: divorced	0.01 (0.02)
Married: single	0.00 (0.01)
Employment: unemployed	-0.06** (0.03)
Employment: housewife	0.01 (0.01)
Employment: student	-0.01 (0.02)
Employment: retired	0.01 (0.03)
Constant	0.69*** (0.02)
Observations	2305
R ²	0.01

Source: National Electoral Study, CIDE-CSES, 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020). Standard errors in parenthesis; *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$.

TABLE A2. Descriptive statistics

Variable	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Anger	2511	0.71	0.24	0	1
Turnout	2509	0.77	0.30	0	1
Populism Index	2523	0.71	0.24	0	1
Evaluation of the economy	2461	0.75	0.26	0	1
Safety assessment	2478	0.76	0.26	0	1
Corruption assessment	2439	0.72	0.26	0	1
Woman	2527	0.52	0.50	0	1
Education	2516	2.13	0.98	1	4
Employment status	2493	2.08	1.22	1	5
Type de electoral precinct	2527	2.52	0.74	1	3
PAN favorability	2527	3.87	3.43	0	10
PRI favorability	2527	2.93	3.25	0	10
PRD favorability	2527	3.12	2.70	0	10
Morena favorability	2527	4.82	3.66	0	10
Partisans (strong/weak)	1471	0.54	0.50	0	1
Presidential approval	2527	1.76	1.16	1	6
Partisanship	2360	2.89	1.14	1	4

Source: National Electoral Study, CIDE-CSES, 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020).

TABLE A3. Modelo MCO
Dependent variable = Evaluation of the economy

	(1) Aggregate	(2) Panistas	(3) Priistas	(4) Morena	(5) Indep.
Populism index (0-1)	0.06*** (0.02)	0.15** (0.06)	-0.06 (0.06)	0.12*** (0.05)	0.13*** (0.03)
Gender: woman	0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.06 (0.04)	0.05 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.02)
Education: elementary	-0.01 (0.01)	0.02 (0.03)	-0.05 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.02)
Education: High school	-0.02 (0.01)	0.01 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.04)	-0.05 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.02)
Education: College+	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.06 (0.05)	0.00 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.03)
Employment: unemployed	-0.01 (0.03)	0.05 (0.08)	-0.11 (0.07)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.04)
Employment: housewife	-0.01 (0.01)	0.02 (0.04)	0.04 (0.04)	-0.05 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.02)
Employment: student	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.07)	-0.02 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.03)
Employment: retired	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.05 (0.07)	-0.04 (0.06)	-0.00 (0.05)	0.02 (0.05)
Electoral precinct: mixed	0.05*** (0.02)	-0.02 (0.05)	0.06 (0.05)	0.06 (0.04)	0.03 (0.02)
Electoral precinct: urban	0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.04)	0.00 (0.04)	0.03 (0.03)	0.00 (0.02)
Fav. PAN (0-10)	-0.00** (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.01*** (0.00)
Fav. PRI (0-10)	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01** (0.01)	-0.01*** (0.00)
Fav. PRD (0-10)	-0.00** (0.00)	-0.01** (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.00)
Fav. Morena (0-10)	0.00 (0.00)	0.01** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.00)
Presidential approval	-0.07*** (0.00)	-0.08*** (0.01)	-0.11*** (0.01)	-0.05*** (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.01)
Partisans (strong/weak)		0.02 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.02)	
Constant	0.87*** (0.03)	0.70*** (0.09)	1.04*** (0.10)	0.72*** (0.07)	0.86*** (0.04)
Observations	2419	419	349	546	940
R ²	0.16	0.16	0.26	0.09	0.12

Source: National Electoral Study, CIDE-CSES, 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020). Standard errors in parenthesis; *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$.

TABLE A4. OLS Model

Dependent variable = Evaluation of the security

	(1) Aggregate	(2) Panistas	(3) Priistas	(4) Morena	(5) Indep.
Populism index (0-1)	0.10*** (0.02)	0.15** (0.06)	-0.01 (0.06)	0.21*** (0.04)	0.10*** (0.03)
Gender: woman	0.01 (0.01)	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.08** (0.04)	0.09*** (0.03)	0.00 (0.02)
Education: elementary	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.05 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.03)	0.03 (0.02)
Education: high school	0.03** (0.01)	0.04 (0.04)	-0.00 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.05*** (0.02)
Education: college+	0.03 (0.02)	0.02 (0.05)	0.03 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.04)	0.03 (0.02)
Employment: unemployed	0.07*** (0.03)	0.11 (0.09)	-0.04 (0.07)	0.09 (0.05)	0.06 (0.04)
Employment: housewife	-0.01 (0.01)	0.03 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)	-0.07** (0.03)	-0.01 (0.02)
Employment: student	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.11** (0.06)	-0.01 (0.07)	-0.08 (0.05)	0.00 (0.03)
Employment: retired	0.01 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.07)	-0.07 (0.06)	0.03 (0.05)	0.06 (0.04)
Electoral precinct: mixed	0.04** (0.02)	0.01 (0.05)	0.09 (0.05)	0.05 (0.04)	0.00 (0.02)
Electoral precinct: urban	0.01 (0.01)	0.03 (0.04)	0.04 (0.04)	0.03 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.02)
Fav. PAN (0-10)	-0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.01** (0.01)	-0.00 (0.00)
Fav. PRI (0-10)	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.02** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01*** (0.00)
Fav. PRD (0-10)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
Fav. Morena (0-10)	0.00** (0.00)	0.02*** (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.00)
Presidential approval	-0.07*** (0.00)	-0.08*** (0.01)	-0.10*** (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.01)
Partisans (strong/ weak)		-0.00 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.02)	
Constant	0.81*** (0.03)	0.64*** (0.10)	0.73*** (0.10)	0.61*** (0.07)	0.83*** (0.04)
Observations	2434	418	351	552	954
R ²	0.15	0.19	0.23	0.12	0.09

Source: National Electoral Study, CIDE-CSES, 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020). Standard errors in parenthesis; *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$.

TABLE A5. OLS Model
Dependent variable = Evaluation of the corruption

	(1) Aggregate	(2) Panistas	(3) Priistas	(4) Morena	(5) Indep.
Populism index (0-1)	0.21*** (0.02)	0.31*** (0.06)	0.20*** (0.06)	0.19*** (0.05)	0.21*** (0.04)
Gender: woman	0.02 (0.01)	0.07** (0.03)	0.07 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.02)
Education: elementary	-0.02 (0.01)	0.03 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.00 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.02)
Education: high school	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.04)	-0.00 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.02)
Education: college+	-0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.05)	-0.00 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.04)	0.01 (0.03)
Employment: unemployed	0.01 (0.03)	0.08 (0.07)	0.04 (0.07)	-0.04 (0.06)	-0.03 (0.05)
Employment: housewife	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.05 (0.03)	-0.08** (0.04)	-0.00 (0.03)	0.03 (0.02)
Employment: student	-0.00 (0.02)	-0.00 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.07)	0.03 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.03)
Employment: retired	-0.03 (0.03)	0.01 (0.06)	-0.07 (0.06)	-0.03 (0.06)	-0.01 (0.05)
Electoral precinct: mixed	0.01 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.04)	0.02 (0.03)
Electoral precinct: urban	-0.03 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.02)
Fav. PAN (0-10)	-0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)
Fav. PRI (0-10)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.00)
Fav. PRD (0-10)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.01** (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.00)
Fav. Morena (0-10)	-0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.00)
Presidential approval	-0.05*** (0.00)	-0.04*** (0.01)	-0.06*** (0.01)	-0.03** (0.01)	-0.05*** (0.01)
Partisans (strong/ weak)		-0.07*** (0.02)	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.02)	
Constant	0.70*** (0.03)	0.56*** (0.09)	0.62*** (0.10)	0.53*** (0.08)	0.74*** (0.04)
Observations	2 399	424	350	540	929
R ²	0.10	0.16	0.14	0.07	0.11

Source: National Electoral Study, CIDE-CSES, 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020). Standard errors in parenthesis; *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$.

TABLE A6. OLS Model

Dependent variable = Believes in the power mafia

	(1) Aggregate	(2) Panistas	(3) Priistas	(4) Morena	(5) Indep.
Populismindex (0-1)	0.36*** (0.03)	0.38*** (0.08)	0.15 (0.08)	0.46*** (0.06)	0.35*** (0.04)
Gender: woman	0.01 (0.02)	0.06 (0.04)	0.00 (0.05)	-0.05 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)
Education: elementary	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.07 (0.04)	0.01 (0.03)	0.01 (0.02)
Education: high school	0.00 (0.02)	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.06)	0.01 (0.04)	0.02 (0.03)
Education: college+	0.01 (0.02)	-0.04 (0.06)	0.03 (0.06)	0.08 (0.05)	-0.00 (0.03)
Employment: unemployed	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.18 (0.10)	-0.02 (0.10)	0.06 (0.07)	-0.02 (0.05)
Employment: housewife	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.07 (0.05)	0.00 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.03)
Employment: student	-0.07*** (0.03)	-0.12 (0.07)	-0.11 (0.09)	-0.02 (0.06)	-0.06 (0.04)
Employment: retired	0.00 (0.03)	0.06 (0.09)	-0.11 (0.09)	-0.03 (0.07)	0.03 (0.06)
Electoral precinct: mixed	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.06)	-0.02 (0.07)	-0.06 (0.05)	0.05 (0.03)
Electoral precinct: urban	0.01 (0.02)	0.04 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.06)	-0.08** (0.03)	0.05 (0.03)
Fav. PAN (0-10)	-0.01*** (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.01*** (0.00)
Fav. PRI (0-10)	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01** (0.00)
Fav. PRD (0-10)	-0.01 (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	-0.01** (0.01)	-0.01** (0.00)
Fav. Morena (0-10)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.00)
Presidential approval	-0.03*** (0.01)	-0.03** (0.01)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.04*** (0.01)	-0.03*** (0.01)
Partisans (strong/ weak)		-0.00 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.04)	0.05 (0.03)	
Constant	0.58*** (0.03)	0.37*** (0.12)	0.71*** (0.13)	0.64*** (0.09)	0.55 *** (0.05)
Observations	2242	394	327	515	864
R ²	0.14	0.14	0.05	0.23	0.16

Source: National Electoral Study, CIDE-CSES, 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020). Standard errors in parenthesis; *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$.

TABLE A7. OLS Model
Dependent variable = Anger (scale 0 to 10)

	(1) Aggregate	(2) Panistas	(3) Priistas	(4) Morena	(5) Indep.
Populism index (0-1)	0.18*** (0.02)	0.00 (0.06)	0.12** (0.06)	0.18*** (0.04)	0.23*** (0.04)
Situation of the economy	0.08*** (0.02)	0.15*** (0.05)	0.04 (0.06)	0.03 (0.04)	0.05 (0.04)
Safety assessment	0.09*** (0.02)	0.07 (0.05)	0.14** (0.06)	0.12*** (0.05)	0.01 (0.04)
Corruption assessment	0.10*** (0.02)	0.19*** (0.05)	0.06 (0.05)	0.12*** (0.04)	0.05 (0.03)
Gender: woman	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)	0.04 (0.02)
Education: elementary	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)	0.03 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)
Education: high school	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.03)	0.03 (0.04)	0.01 (0.03)	0.01 (0.02)
Education: college+	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.04 (0.05)	0.01 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.03)
Employment: unemployed	0.05 (0.03)	0.15** (0.07)	0.02 (0.07)	0.01 (0.05)	0.01 (0.04)
Employment: housewife	0.00 (0.01)	0.09*** (0.03)	-0.02 (0.04)	0.01 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.02)
Employment: student	-0.01 (0.02)	0.05 (0.05)	-0.07 (0.06)	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.03)
Employment: retired	0.06** (0.03)	0.06 (0.06)	0.03 (0.05)	0.08 (0.05)	0.05 (0.05)
Electoral precinct: mixed	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)	-0.05 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.03)
Electoral precinct: urban	-0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.03)	0.00 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.00 (0.02)
Fav. PAN (0-10)	0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.00)
Fav. PRI (0-10)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)	0.01** (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.01** (0.00)
Fav. PRD (0-10)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Fav. Morena (0-10)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	0.02*** (0.01)	0.00 (0.00)
Presidential approval	-0.01** (0.01)	-0.03*** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Partisans (strong/weak)		-0.05** (0.02)	-0.02 (0.03)	0.04 (0.02)	
Constant	0.38*** (0.04)	0.35*** (0.09)	0.33*** (0.11)	0.21 *** (0.08)	0.50*** (0.06)
Observations	2,313	407	342	525	888
R ²	0.11	0.23	0.11	0.16	0.09

Source: National Electoral Study, CIDE-CSES, 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020). Standard errors in parenthesis; *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$.

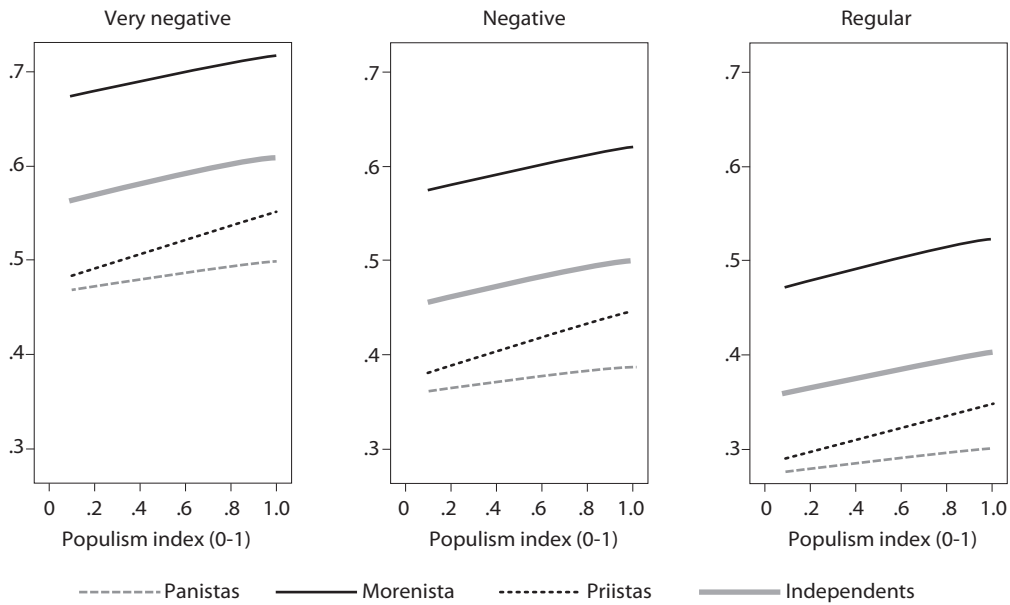
TABLE A8. OLS Model

Dependent variable = Turnout (scale 0-10)

	(1) Aggregate	(2) Panistas	(3) Priistas	(4) Morena	(5) Indep.
Populism index (0-1)	0.24*** (0.03)	0.09 (0.05)	0.11** (0.05)	0.24*** (0.04)	0.12** (0.05)
Situation of the economy	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.04)	0.05 (0.05)	0.04 (0.04)	0.06 (0.06)
Safety assessment	-0.05 (0.03)	0.12*** (0.04)	0.01 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.07 (0.06)
Corruption assessment	0.00 (0.02)	0.05 (0.04)	0.02 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.05 (0.05)
Gender: woman	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.05 (0.03)	0.02 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.03)
Education: elementary	-0.02 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)	0.00 (0.03)
Education: high school	-0.00 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)	-0.00 (0.03)
Education: college+	-0.00 (0.02)	0.02 (0.04)	0.07** (0.03)	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.04)
Employment: unemployed	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.06)	-0.02 (0.05)	0.01 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.06)
Employment: housewife	-0.00 (0.02)	0.01 (0.03)	0.09*** (0.03)	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.03)
Employment: student	-0.04 (0.02)	-0.00 (0.04)	0.01 (0.05)	-0.05 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.04)
Employment: retired	0.00 (0.03)	0.05 (0.05)	0.03 (0.04)	-0.07 (0.04)	-0.11 (0.07)
Electoral precinct: mixed	0.02 (0.02)	0.03 (0.04)	0.02 (0.04)	-0.00 (0.03)	0.00 (0.04)
Electoral precinct: urban	0.04** (0.02)	0.02 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.03)
Fav. PAN (0-10)	0.01*** (0.00)	0.02*** (0.01)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.02*** (0.00)
Fav. PRI (0-10)	0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01 (0.00)	0.01 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.01** (0.00)
Fav. PRD (0-10)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)	0.01** (0.00)	-0.00 (0.01)
Fav. Morena (0-10)	0.02*** (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	0.01*** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.00)
Presidential approval	0.02** (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)
Partisans (strong/weak)		0.08*** (0.02)	0.09 (0.02)	0.03*** (0.02)	
Constant	0.44*** (0.04)	0.51*** (0.08)	0.58*** (0.09)	0.58*** (0.07)	0.29*** (0.08)
Observations	2 313	407	342	527	886
R ²	0.11	0.18	0.18	0.16	0.16

Source: National Electoral Study, CIDE-CSES, 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro, 2020). Standard errors in parenthesis; *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$.

FIGURE A1. Probability of Voting for AMLO (under different scenarios)



Source: National Electoral Study, CIDE-CSES, 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020).

Figure A1 simulates the probability of voting for Andrés Manuel López Obrador as the level of populism of voters increases under three scenarios: (1) voters who have a very bad evaluation of the economy, security, and corruption, a very strong belief in a “power mafia”, and a very high level of anger; (2) voters who have a bad evaluation of the economy, security, and corruption, a strong belief in a power mafia, and a high level of anger; finally, (3) voters who have a moderate evaluation of the economy, security, and corruption, a moderate belief in a power mafia, and a moderate level of anger.

Consistent with the argument of this work, substantive differences are observed between groups with different partisan identities. No matter the scenario, there is a difference between voters who self-identify with Morena and independents of more than 10 percentage points, and around 20 percentage points between the former and *priistas* and *panistas* (there is no difference between *priistas* and *panistas*). This is relevant because among *panistas* and *priistas*, even in the face of a very negative evaluation of the context, a very strong belief in a corrupt elite, or a very intense anger at the country’s situation (maximum values in each case), these conditions do not translate automatically into support comparable to that of voters who self-identify with Morena, the party of Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

Why do Parties Cheat? Institutional Choice in Mexico after Democratization

Joy Langston*

ABSTRACT: This paper examines Mexico's democracy since 1996 to understand the motivations of party leaders in creating and manipulating laws that shape competition and collusion. It finds that party leaders negotiated institutional outcomes that allowed them to cheat in the short-term and leave consequences of a non-cooperative strategy to future leaders. However, at each stage of the political game, leaders continue to follow the same strategy of non-compliance, which can ultimately lead to electoral disaster.

KEYWORDS: electoral reforms, political parties, short-term strategies.

¿Por qué los partidos hacen trampa? Cambios en las normas electorales en México después de la democratización

RESUMEN: Este artículo estudia la democracia mexicana desde 1996 para comprender las motivaciones de los líderes de partido al crear y manipular leyes que definen la competencia y la colusión electorales. Encuentra que los líderes de los tres principales partidos (PRI, PAN y PRD) negociaron resultados institucionales que les permitieron hacer trampa en el corto plazo, a la vez que dejar las consecuencias reputacionales de una estrategia que erosionaba al árbitro electoral a los futuros líderes. Sin embargo, la sistematización de esa estrategia de incumplimiento condujo en última instancia a un desastre electoral.

PALABRAS CLAVE: reforma electoral, partidos políticos, estrategias de corto plazo.

INTRODUCTION

In many newer democracies around the world, political parties or other political actors construct third-party enforcers, known as electoral management bodies (EMB), to manage elections, which allows them to take advantage of a longer time

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horizon and invest in their label without fear that other parties will commit fraud (IDEA, 2014). Parties may want to manipulate the electoral institutions for their own benefit, but they must forge rules that are seen as fair both by voters and other electoral actors so that electoral outcomes are accepted, even by losers. However, as Birch and Van Ham recognize (2017: 487), electoral management bodies are immersed in the political game they are supposed to regulate, and so, it is difficult to achieve “de facto independence from political influence...” This implies, then, a tension that has only begun to be recognized: just as parties create formally autonomous or semi-autonomous institutions to limit their actions for their own benefit—they also have strong incentives to cheat on these rules if possible and write laws so they can manipulate or weaken the EMB. This article examines a single electoral system—Mexico’s—to better understand party motivations of non-compliance. We find that leaders of political parties engage in two types of questionable behavior: first, they often collude among themselves to write laws that benefit themselves while harming other types of political actors, such as voters, potential party leaders and office seekers; and second, they ignore the negotiated rules and cheat against each other when compliance would help their long-term goals.

Party leaders often have two sets of interests when dealing with EMBS; one which they share with other parties; and one they do not.¹ Most party leaders and their counterparts want to shore up their ability to win seats through a variety of means such as procuring large public budgets, high barriers of entry for new parties, and control over their ambitious politicians via closed candidate selection.² So, even while party leaders seek to commit electoral fraud against their party rivals, they often cooperate with them to block other types of actors from participating more fully in the political arena. These dual interests can lead to the capture of the regulatory institution by the actors it is supposed to obligate to comply.

Because of the nature of repeated play implied in elections and in electoral rule making, the present paper emphasizes the “time frame problem”. Party leaders and candidates have strong incentives to bring home electoral victories by any means necessary, especially if they know the other party will cheat. If these leaders hold short time horizons in that post may resort to non-compliant behavior because electoral victories under their tenure promote their personal careers. However, if all party leaders continue the same strategy, then cheating and harassment of the electoral authority will prevail, leading to non-optimal outcomes, such as increasing

¹ Tsebelis (1990: 104) argued that electoral rules were “redistributive” institutions, because a seat awarded to one party cannot be awarded to another, making it a zero-sum game. This is not always the case, however, because parties in many electoral systems share at least some common interests.

² In this paper, the author does not distinguish among the parties in terms of their level of cheating. As will be clear below, all parties engage in duplicitous behavior, and while some parties cheat more than others, it is a question of relatively small differences.

voter rejection of parties. The fallout from duplicitous behavior may not affect the careers of the party leaders because the costs of non-compliance are paid in the future.³ Therefore, they hold strong interests to write rules they can manipulate in the present, and they are willing to forward the costs of their behavior because of the high probability they will not be leaders when negative consequences of their negotiations come to bear.

The literature on regulatory capture helps illuminate a central problem: industry players within a regulated sector are often able to capture the regulator and, in doing so, can raise the barriers to entry for new actors, allowing them to offer sub-standard “products” at higher costs. As a result, the customers—or voters in this case—often lose out. This work will show that the electoral regulatory agencies that make up the electoral management bodies have been—to a greater or lesser extent—captured by the parties that placed them, leaving them in a weak position against both parties and the executive branch.

One might ask why all nations do not exhibit captured electoral institutions and non-compliant parties. First, not every nation has a strong party system, especially not in newer democracies (Mainwaring and Scully, 1995) and so they lack powerful parties capable of harassing electoral authorities. Second, other political institutions may shore up a weaker electoral authority, as Birch and Van Ham (2017) suggest. The question remains, however, whether new democracies are able to bring to bear other institutions to protect elections. Many new or challenged democracies in Latin America, such as Nicaragua, Ecuador, Venezuela, Guatemala, and Honduras, share Mexico’s problematic informal behavior.⁴ It may well be that EMBS in developing democracies are weaker in practice than they appear due to general institutional debility.

Mexico is rightly famous for its pacific transition to democracy in 2000, and the important role that political parties and electoral reforms played in the defeat of the long-lived authoritarian PRI (Party of the Institutional Revolution) regime (Becerra *et al.*, 1997; Eisenstadt, 2004; Greene, 2007; Langston, 2017; Merino, 2004; Lujambio, 2000). The PRI, the center-right National Action Party (PAN), and center-left Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) were the cornerstones of the nation’s party system and dominated both votes and seats between 1991 and 2015. The PAN controlled the presidency from 2000 to 2006, and another PAN president governed from 2006-2012. The PRI roared back into the executive in 2012 under the leadership of Enrique Peña Nieto.⁵ However, in the concurrent elections of 2018, the

³ If party leaders stay in office for long periods of time, one should see different outcomes because they must endogenize the costs and benefits of their actions into the future.

⁴ See González-Ocanto *et al.* (2012: 206), for remarks on Nicaragua’s 2008 municipal elections. Also invaluable is Norris, Wynter and Cameron (2018).

⁵ Presidential terms in Mexico last six years and the president can never run for reelection to the post.

three traditional parties were routed by an outsider party (National Regeneration Movement or Morena), led by a charismatic politician. As of now, two of the three traditional parties may not survive the next election cycles, which could spell the end of the nation's current party system, underlining the serious outcomes of party tactics against their EMBS and other political actors.

This paper examines the process of electoral institution rulemaking and implementation during elections and at other moments during the transition years and into the first years of democracy (1996 through 2014) using official documentation, secondary literature, and newspaper accounts. I also interview several relevant actors to better capture party leader strategies over time: former leaders of the nation's two electoral authorities (known as the National Electoral Institute (INE or IFE) and the Federal Electoral Tribunal (Tribunal Electoral del Poder Judicial de la Federación, known as the Trife or TEPJF);⁶ former party leaders; and academic experts on the topic.

ELECTORAL INSTITUTIONS AND NON-COMPLIANT ACTORS

Generally speaking, institutions are rules that allow actors to gain greater benefits from cooperation by defining and limiting behavior (Knight and Sened, 1998; Miller, 2005; North, 1990). Institutions are outcomes of social decisions chosen by boundedly rational actors in negotiations with an aim of winning benefits for their group, while also allowing others to benefit. They solve the problem of collective action by creating credible sanctioning mechanisms and are meant to regulate behavior into the foreseeable future, although they are often modified. Even if an authoritarian group participates in negotiations while planning to ignore them in practice, the institutionalization of specific rules, the employment of large numbers of personnel, and the procurement of budgets allow actors to coordinate around rules which can compel all actors to comply over time.

We define efficient institutions as those that make actors better off through monitoring and sanctioning, often by creating a third-party enforcer that adjudicates, monitors, and applies punishment for cheating. Inefficient institutions, on the other hand, are those that make some actors worse off, either because it is difficult to coordinate or because stronger groups refuse to allow changes to rules. For example, an inefficient set of political institutions may fail to create strong property rights, allowing the executive to confiscate with relative impunity, which reduces future investment and economic growth (North, 1990). Inefficient rules can also lead to the eventual destruction of the system in which the actors are immersed, whether it be a specific market sector or a stable party system.

⁶ I treat both elements of the electoral authority, management and adjudication, as important but separate, as both come under intense pressure from the executive and parties.

Electoral institutions in a democracy are a type of political institution that grows out of group bargaining, whether it be in a single shot game or through incremental rule creation and change. Actors care about the present and the future; and to protect their benefits into the future, they use their political power in the present to assure their position, even though the future is inherently uncertain (Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson, 2005: 293). At the most basic level, the actors involved in electoral rulemaking usually try to protect their seat or vote count or enlarge it (Colomer, 2005).⁷

Party leaders normally modify electoral rules in reaction to external threats, such as franchise expansion, new parties, or voter preference change (Benoit, 2007; Rokkan, 1970). Electoral rules are made by parties, for parties, with the expectation that these same organizations will then comply with the rules they have created, because over the long-term, they benefit from them. However, it is clear that parties or other political actors in many nations cheat or manipulate the very rules they helped create. By far the greatest attention is paid to autocratic or electoral authoritarian regimes and their efforts to keep opposition parties from competing on a level playing field (Birch, 2008; Eisenstadt, 2004; Fortin-Rittberger, Harfst, and Dingler, 2017; Levitsky and Wey, 2009). However, far less is written about why parties in less consolidated democracies refuse to comply with rules they negotiated.⁸

The central actors in this case are those with control over the electoral system, especially party leaders, congressional leaders, and the chief executive. Their preferences are to win elections, take control of the government apparatus, and win more resources. The first two goals are winner-take-all in nature, so that parties compete over them: what one party wins, another party loses. However, party leaders often decide to build a cooperative electoral authority where all are better off because they cooperate in anticipation that the other will do so. This cooperative strategy is only possible if the actors believe the electoral authority is strong enough to oblige the other parties to do the same; otherwise, they must cheat to avoid the worst pay-off. Without a strong third-party enforcer, parties find themselves in a single shot prisoners' dilemma game in terms of competition at the ballot box. Even in this situation, parties still share interests, such as raising barriers to entry and controlling candidate selection, which allows them to cooperate in other areas.

⁷ Larger parties prefer more restrictive rules to minimize the participation of smaller rivals, while small parties want electoral systems that are more representative, so they can acquire seats in congress (Colomer, 2005).

⁸ As Katz (2005) argues, majoritarian parties (those with the largest seat shares) should only change electoral rules when it is to their benefit. What is not clear, however, is whether that benefit is in the future or present.

Estévez, Magar, and Rosas (2007) argue that relationship between Mexico's electoral authority and the parties it regulates can be understood as a principal-agent model. In their view, the EMB is not independent or autonomous from the parties because the latter retain their ability to hire and fire councilors and control the budget of the EMB. The parties are principals and select their agents to serve on the electoral authority, and then exercise external pressure during their tenures: the councilors either accede to the parties' demands or refuse to do so. If the councilors (or magistrates) refuse to follow their party sponsor's bidding, the principals have various instruments to sanction them. In anticipation of this, councilors and magistrates duly represent the interests of the party that sponsored them.

However, the metaphor of a principal-agent relation between parties and electoral authorities is not entirely felicitous. In the economic literature, the agent is not responsible for monitoring and sanctioning her principal, who placed her in the post and pays her to make decisions that are consonant with her demands. Logically, it is difficult, if not impossible, for the agent to restrain her boss. A better metaphor to illuminate the relations between parties and EMB is regulatory capture, in which the government creates a regulatory agency with the capacity to monitor and sanction companies in a certain sector. Regulatory capture is defined as when the agency's interests are more closely tied to those agents than they are to the public good (Stigler, 1971).

Regulatory authorities learn after repeated interactions with the companies that their external clients have a strong preference not to comply with certain rules, but rather, pursue ends that help their bottom line. In this case, as Stigler warned (1971), the agency no longer protects the public from industry abuse, but rather, helps erect barriers to protect them from competitive entry of other companies. By reducing the threat of external competition, sectoral companies can collude amongst themselves and raise prices, while not improving services. In the case of Mexican parties, the "industry" is made up of political parties, and their leaders are better informed than the voting public about how they pursue their goals, at the same time they are able to nominate and remove recalcitrant members of the regulatory agency qua electoral authority (Carrigan and Coglianese, 2011).

Mexico can be seen as a case of capture of the regulatory body in which the principal concern of the parties is to deny new entrants into the party system, to deny voters more party options, and to restrain party activists and office seekers in their efforts to capture more power from party leaders.

Three different types of models of authority have been discussed in terms of global electoral authorities; independent, governmental, and mixed (IDEA, 2014: 9-10). Mexico's model is clearly an example of the independent model, in that the EMB is not part of the executive, it holds responsibility for implementing the laws, and it can manage its own yearly budget (IDEA, 2014: 9-10). Yet, formal indepen-

dence does not make the EMB autonomous in practice, as the Mexican case demonstrates. The regulatory capture allowed the parties to cheat on the rules they negotiated and passed, which, over the long-term, led to a collective outcome that was worse for all.

On the other side of the electoral equation, one finds the leaders of the EMB, whose responsibilities are to create the conditions so that voters' preferences are accurately translated into electoral outcomes. However, electoral authorities often hold other preferences that are closer to those of the regulated: they want to maintain their well-paid posts while conserving the outward perception of autonomy and fairness of their institution. Yet many work diligently to follow the law as they interpret it. At times, regulators must antagonize the parties because of the latter's questionable behavior. If parties or the executive wish to weaken the EMB, they can do so through a series of maneuvers than run from simple pressure to outright malfeasance, such as placing close allies in the EMB's leadership councils, threatening to reduce budgets, removing councilors or magistrates without cause, pushing others to renounce their posts because of personal scandals, or promising the current electoral administrators and judges future access to political posts.

Lara (2017a: 158) argues that when parties and their representatives cannot participate in electoral management bodies, they may criticize and undermine the work of the authorities, causing all to be worse off. However, it is also the case that when representatives do participate in EMBS, they can and will undermine the electoral authority when it furthers their electoral goals. Thus, participation in the EMB does not preclude non-compliant strategies; in fact, it can make double-dealing even easier.

Alarcón (2016: 20-21) expresses what most specialists of Mexican electoral system argue: that the parties, in the course of trying to win elections, press the limits of the law, and in doing so, help reveal relatively important weaknesses or problems—thus, one sees that after criticisms of the 2009 election, the executive and later the three parties in congress opened up (somewhat) the party system to new actors via consecutive reelection and independent candidacies. The parties join together in congress to improve the laws so that these drawbacks are mitigated. A related argument is that the three largest Mexican parties used electoral reforms to shore up, pay back, or strengthen one of the three after each contested election. In this understanding, the reforms of the 1990s sought the incorporation of PAN and later the PRD; the 2007 reform was enacted to placate the PRD; and in 2014, the parties solidified the three-party political system. This broad explanation, however, does not uncover the incentives for continually weakening outsider political actors; nor does it capture why and how the parties undermined their third-party enforcer. What the following section will show, however, is that while party leaders correct large-scale problems for the large parties via negotiations, they also took advantage

of each reform to impose higher costs on participation for smaller parties, ambitious politicians, and voters. Party control over the negotiation of new electoral rules in Congress and the executive's desire to support his party helps explain these bi-polar outcomes, as does the short-sited nature of leaders' interests.

Finally, one could argue that party leaders are not double-dealing actors who only think of short-term gains. Another line of inquiry in the theories of transactions holds that boundedly rational actors often make mistakes when negotiating, and in doing so, make rules that later create unintended—and often negative—consequences (Williamson, 1984). It might be that boundedly rational actors change electoral laws to suit their immediate needs and do not properly calculate the future consequences. The complicated nature of party negotiation, the unknowable effects of different sets of rules, as well as the changes in electoral outcomes and technologies, can produce rules that have little relation with those that the parties set out to pass in congress. If this argument holds weight, then one should see corrections in later reforms to undo the self-inflicted damage.⁹ As this paper will show, intentional duplicity as well as bounded rationality under the stress of multi-party negotiations led to a series of problematic electoral rules.

MEXICO'S VOTED TRANSITION AND BEYOND

Mexico's transition to democracy from 1988 through 2000 was a clear example of a "voted transition" (Merino, 2004). In addition to political and economic crises, as well as an armed rebellion, the main drivers behind Mexico's transition were the three largest nation's parties, whose leaders negotiated a series of electoral reforms beginning in 1989 (which created the autonomous National Electoral Institute, or IFE) after the problematic victory of the PRI's candidate in 1988, which culminated in the transformative 1996 reform. The 1996 reform freed the electoral authority from the interference of the still-hegemonic PRI executive, instituted voting stations and counting procedures that were run by randomly selected citizens and gave opposition parties access to ample campaign resources and media time (Merino, 2004; Becerra *et al.*, 1997).

Yet, the three parties that led the nation through a relatively non-violent transition, and won the vast majority of seats and votes nationwide (allowing them to control the legislative and the presidency for almost two decades) are now fighting for the future of their organizations, in large part, because voters believe they are corrupt and ineffective. The PRI lost almost 81 per cent of its seats between 2009 and 2018; the PRD saw its seat count reduced by 48 per cent and the PAN by 45 per

⁹ A former IFE councilor gave an example: a party leader wished to reduce the number of RP slots in congress, but such a measure would have harmed the leader's party. Interview with Arturo Sánchez, March 13, 2019.

cent.¹⁰ This work does not assign all the blame for the decline of the traditional parties on their non-cooperative behavior in elections and their ability to throw up barriers to citizen participation. Corruption, low economic growth, and large-scale organized criminal activities are obviously important factors in the 2018 electoral crash. The ability of the parties to control representation blunted feedback from voters to party leaders and allowed these problems to fester (Langston, 2017). Negative citizen evaluations of the parties matter only if it is possible to “vote them out”. These barriers (along with many other factors, such as clientelism), made it difficult to punish parties when they did not deliver. Over time, this helped lead to a massive rejection of the nation’s three major parties in 2018.

The creation of Morena under the clear leadership of former PRD leader and two-time losing presidential candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador allowed the voters to punish the traditional parties in his third attempt to win the presidency. As is clear, the PAN and the PRD suffered serious losses as well as the PRI, meaning the 2018 results were not just a rejection of the incumbent PRI; it was an acknowledgement that the parties were complicit in corruption, bad legislative management, and the growing takeover by criminal organizations of large swaths of the nation’s territory.

Before entering into the account of electoral reforms and malpractice, I present several broad assessments of what is present in the historical record. First, it is important to ask why one sees constant electoral reforming in Mexico. Molinar (1991) argued that in certain kinds of political contexts, the hegemonic PRI imposed electoral reforms that were more inclined to open the party system or render it more restrictive. Yet, since the onset of rising electoral competition, one sees that party leaders have written, negotiated, and passed in Congress all sorts of self-limiting rules, while, at the same time —*and in the same reform*— imposing duplicitous procedures on the electoral authority and other political actors, such as activists, ambitious partisans, and voters. This variation demonstrates that it cannot be that a specific political context leads to one type of outcome (self-limiting rules or strengthening the electoral authority) or another (rules that can be manipulated; or cheating during campaigns).

Second, parties in congress, or at least a majority coalition, negotiated these reforms together: that is, after 1986, there was no hegemonic imposition of an entire set of rules. If the PRI wanted support in a major policy program, it would negotiate an electoral reform with the second largest party, the PAN.¹¹ However, in almost all of

¹⁰ See www.diputados.gob.mx.

¹¹ President Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994) negotiated a series of reforms with the PAN in the early 1990s in exchange for PAN support in congress. President Ernesto Zedillo, in the midst of an economic crisis, negotiated with both the PAN and the PRD leading up to the groundbreaking 1996 reforms. In the 2014 reforms, the PRI needed the PAN’s support to pass a profound energy reform.

Mexico's post 1990 reforms, the PRD was involved, at least during the negotiations. This is an important point because it is not the case that incumbent parties make decisions over whether to cheat or not while the opposition must react to their decision, as some have argued (Chernykh and Svolik, 2015). Third, there has not been a single nation-wide election since perhaps 1982 without at least some complaints made by one party against another, and certainly these complaints have continued since democratization in 2000.¹² At this point, we do not know if this is because the parties cheat in every single election; because they think they can fool the electoral authority that the other parties are not complying with the electoral rules; or because they think they win some sort of benefit from extorting the winner (Hernández, 2019).

Fourth, just as parties claim their rivals cheated in each election, after the 2006 elections, one sees that at least one party (or candidate) demanded an electoral reform after each federal contest. In 2006, after a grueling presidential campaign carried out in television and radio, the losing candidate demanded new rules to control the media and undertake semi-automatic recounts. After complaints in the 2009 mid-term legislative elections, the parties allowed some opening of the party system, which led to an important transformation in 2014. After the 2012 presidential elections, the PAN demanded in the 2014 reforms (as part of the Pact for Mexico for which the PRI needed their support), that the IFE be strengthened to stop gubernatorial interference, among many other issues.¹³ However, it is also clear that party leaders collude to take advantage of these reform moments to act on their common benefits.

The evidence presented below is mixed and includes interviews, legal documents, and secondary literature. I chose the subjects based on lists of former party leaders, government actors, academics, and members of the EMBS. The interviews were semi-structured. In most cases, I asked directly why certain decisions over rules and implementation had been taken.

The secondary literature on the electoral laws in Spanish is quite abundant; although work on the reasons behind the decision making is not. Very few academic studies have studied the effects of the reforms over time. The electoral laws themselves are available online. I am limited by space from listing all the rules which the parties created and later ignored or manipulated; that must be left for another time. Still, in Table 1 many of the reforms are documented and allow us to capture both the variation and the questionable laws that are alluded to in each reform. Finally, instead of listing all the examples of party non-compliance with the formal institutions, I have included the value of the fines that were applied by the EMB on the parties.

¹² For examples in state elections, see Velasco and Herrera (2013).

¹³ Reportedly, the PAN demanded a centralization of authority away from the State Electoral Institutes, which were usually captured by the governors, reportedly leading to defeats of some PAN gubernatorial candidates.

TABLE 1. Different dimensions of electoral activities in Mexico*

		Before 1990	1996 Reform	2007 Reform	2014 Reform	Explanation
	Pre-election					
Electoral laws	<i>Unfair to smaller parties</i>	yes	no	yes	yes	<i>New parties only every six years 2007; 3% barrier 2014</i>
	Favor the governing party	yes	no	no	no	Reforms of 1990s
	<i>Restricted citizens' rights</i>	yes	yes	yes	yes	<i>No consecutive reelection; then restricted reelection; gender quotas manipulated; independent candidacies very difficult; cannot in practice be involved in candidate selection; difficult to form small parties</i>
Electoral procedures	Well managed elections	no	yes	yes	yes	Reforms of 1990s
	Info about voting procedures available	no	yes	yes	yes	Reforms of 1990s
Voter registration	Some not listed in register	yes	no	no	no	Reforms of 1990s
	Electoral list not accurate	yes	no	no	no	Reforms of 1990s
	Some ineligible were registered	yes	few	few	no	Reforms of 1990s
Party registration	<i>Some opposition candidates couldn't run</i>	no	no	no	yes	<i>Due to increasing narco involvement in politics</i>
	<i>Women had equal opportunities to run.**</i>	no	no	yes	yes	<i>Gender quotas slowly allowed women to be nominated</i>
	<i>Ethnic minorities could run</i>	no	no	no	no	<i>Legally, yes. In practice, difficult</i>
	<i>Only top party leaders selected candidates</i>	yes, except PAN	no	yes	yes	<i>Since 2007 reform, internal democracy is not well regulated by the EMB.</i>
	Some parties could not hold rallies	yes	no	no	no	Reforms of 1996 and democratization.

TABLE 1. Different dimensions of electoral activities in Mexico (continuation)

		Before 1990	1996 Reform	2007 Reform	2014 Reform	Explanation
	During campaign					
Campaign media	Newspapers were balanced	no	no	no	no	Certain newspapers have strong political slants
	TV news favored governing party	yes	somewhat	yes	yes	1990s reforms forced more openness. Government pays for positive coverage
	Parties had access to media advertising	not opposition parties	yes	yes	yes	Reforms of the 1990s
	Journalists provided fair coverage of elections	no	somewhat	somewhat	somewhat	Democratization
	Social media used to expose electoral fraud	n.a.	no	yes	yes	Photos; stories
Campaign finance	<i>Parties had fair access to public subsidies</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>Reform of 1996; smaller parties do; independent candidates still have problems.</i>
	<i>Parties had fair access to political donations</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>Reform of 1996; all have fair access, but some parties accept millions of pesos illegally.</i>
	<i>Parties publish transparent financial accounts</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>yes and no</i>	<i>yes and no</i>	<i>Reporting requirements have become far more rigorous; however, much of what they spend is not in the official accounts.</i>
	Rich can buy elections	no	no	no	no	
	Strengthening Accounting	no	no	yes	yes	The 2007 reform allowed the IFE to look at the parties' bank account information. In 2014, the entire system of accounting was overhauled.
	<i>Some state resources were improperly used for campaigning.</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>Governors spend on elections; governing party does as well.</i>
	Election day					
Voting process	<i>Some voters were threatened at polls</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>fewer</i>	<i>some</i>	<i>some</i>	<i>Reforms of 1990s. But, since at least 2012,</i>

TABLE 1. Different dimensions of electoral activities in Mexico (continuation)

		Before 1990	1996 Reform	2007 Reform	2014 Reform	Explanation
						<i>Alianza Cívica has reported that 21% of polling places had violations of ballot secrecy. Reports of election day violence.</i>
	Some fraudulent votes were cast	yes	fewer	fewer	fewer	Reforms of 1990s
	Voting was easy	no	yes	yes	yes	Reforms of 1990s
	Genuine choice at ballot box	no	yes	yes	yes	Reforms of 1990s and democratization
	Postal ballots were available	no	no	no	no	
	Special facilities for disabled	no	no	no	no	
	Nations living abroad could vote	no	no	yes	yes	2005 reform
	Internet voting was available.	n.a.	no	no	no	
Post election						
Vote count	Ballot boxes were secure	no	yes	yes	yes	Reforms of 1990s
	Results announced quickly	no	yes	yes	yes	Except in 2006 presidential elections
	Votes counted fairly	no	yes	yes	yes	Reforms of 1990s; many arithmetic mistakes, but counting is done by citizens. <i>However, reports that casilla representatives are bought off, especially in poorer areas.</i>
	International election monitors were restricted	yes	no	no	no	Reforms of 1990s
	Domestic monitors were restricted	yes	no	no	no	Reforms of 1990s
Post election	<i>Parties challenged results.</i>	yes	no	yes	yes	<i>Almost all major election outcomes are contested; fewer in lower level races.</i>

TABLE 1. Different dimensions of electoral activities in Mexico (continuation)

		Before 1990	1996 Reform	2007 Reform	2014 Reform	Explanation
	<i>Election led to peaceful protests</i>	yes	no	yes	no	<i>Except in 2006, with an extremely close election outcome, and some gubernatorial elections. This rarely happens in legislative races, however.</i>
	Elections triggered violent protests	no	no	no	no	
	<i>Disputes resolved through legal channels</i>	no	yes	yes	yes	<i>However, there are many questions about the fairness of the Tribunal (2012; 2018).</i>
Electoral authorities	<i>Were impartial</i>	no	yes	somewhat	somewhat	Reforms of 1990s; Doubts about the IFE and Tribunal; Party quotas; hiring and firing.
	Distributed info to citizens	no	yes	yes	yes	Reforms of 1990s
	Allowed public scrutiny of their performance	no	somewhat	somewhat	somewhat	Reforms of 1990s
	<i>Performed well</i>	no	yes	somewhat	somewhat	<i>Fepade*** does not function fully; electoral authorities seem unwilling to fine the governing party in 2012 and 2018.</i>
Reversals	Professional Selection Criteria for IFE-INE		2014	2014 reforms complicated the process of INE councilor selection to reduce the possibility of party quotas.		
	Accounting unit		2014	In 2007, the accounting unit was removed from the General Counsel. It was returned in 2014.		
	Denigrating Institutions		2014	In 2007, the law changed so that candidates could not denigrate or slander other candidates or political institutions. In 2014, candidates could make negative comments about institutions.		

Source: Norris, Frank y Martínez i Coma (2013: 127). Answers for Mexico provided by author. *Birch (2012) divides electoral malpractice into different categories: manipulating rules, manipulating the will of the voter, and committing fraud on election day. The present work disaggregates non-compliance into three general categories: writing the rules so they can be manipulated in practice, cheating on the written rules, and weakening the electoral authorities. **The parties continued to manipulate their gender quotas until the Tribunal forced them to nominate at 40 per cent in 2012. Finally, parties are able to beat the 8 per cent over-representation rule for the Lower House using coalitions. ***Fepade is part of the judicial system and is charged with investigating criminal electoral fraud.

THE REFORMS OF ELECTORAL LAW IN MEXICO

Several legal bases for Mexico's transition to democracy can be traced back to the 1986 electoral reform—the last in which the hegemonic executive imposed its will on other parties—and the 1988 presidential elections.¹⁴ In the electoral reform of 1986, the executive changed the make-up of the electoral authority so it no longer required the coopted, satellite parties then active in the Mexican party system to form part of the majority on the Consejo de la Comisión Federal Electoral. When two PRI party leaders decided to leave the hegemonic PRI, the satellite parties offered the outcasts the use of their electoral registration so that one of these leaders—Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas—could run for president. Under the Frente Democrático, Cárdenas came close to bringing down the PRI's official candidate, Carlos Salinas; but, because of a computer glitch perpetrated by the Interior Ministry, Salinas won the election with slightly more than 50 per cent of the votes.

After this close call, the hegemonic PRI regime began almost a decade of negotiations over electoral reforms, first with the long-lived opposition PAN, and later including the new unified left Party of the Democratic Revolution, or PRD. The PRI and the opposition parties negotiated electoral reforms in 1989-1990, 1993, 1994, and finally, in 1996, *before* the PRI lost its majority in the Lower House of Congress in 1997 and the presidency in 2000. Thus, negotiating over electoral rules and elections played a crucial role in the end of authoritarian government in Mexico as each reform allowed for more transparency and fairness in election management, voting lists, voter identification, media openness, and financing, among many other issues.

The 1996 electoral reform

A second round of negotiations over Mexico's electoral rules began after January 1, 1994, due a series of blows to the government: first, the Zapatista Army rose up against the Mexican state and second, the PRI's presidential candidate was assassinated in March. Finally, an economic crisis erupted in December, leading to high inflation, rising interest rates, and a government bail-out of the banks. In part because of these pressures, the new president of Mexico, Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000) made good on his campaign promise to negotiate yet another electoral reform with opposition party leaders that would make elections fair and force losers to accept their defeat. The constitutional changes in the reform were passed in 1996, ending 50 years of hegemonic control over Mexico's electoral authority when the Secretary of Government (still in the hands of the PRI) was taken off the General Council of the IFE, making the electoral management body far more autonomous of the government.

¹⁴ The liberalization of the Mexican political system began in 1977, with an electoral reform that instituted a mixed majority system, with guaranteed seats for opposition parties.

However, it was not a perfect democratic model, for a variety of reasons. First, as a former councilor of the IFE remarked, “the 1996 reform was a pact negotiated by an elite that did not want to lose its control over the electoral apparatus”. Although the new political elite now included leaders from opposition parties, none was ready to accept activist and outsider participation in activities other than voting. Therefore, although the different party leaders and the regime leadership fought over many elements of the electoral regime, they found they had many issues in common: public financing, control over ambitious office seekers; and control over candidate selection, among others. These common interests proved both beneficial and dangerous; beneficial because the parties could agree to write and rewrite rules and laws that supported their interests, but dangerous because, over time, their ability to close off the party system to other actors reduced representation and accountability of their elected officials.

Thanks to the 1996 reform, the executive no longer controlled the selection of the councilors of the General Council: they were now chosen by a super-majority in the lower house of congress, which allowed the parties, the subjects of regulation, to choose their regulators (as well as write the laws that regulated them). A super-majority vote in congress also encouraged cooperation among the parties to select the councilors. In 1996, the selection of the new set of councilors was a game of vetoes that the parties used against the propositions of other parties. That is, each party proposed at least two to three possible candidates for the Council, and the other parties could veto these proposals. The parties then chose the “best of the acceptable”.¹⁵ Most of those chosen to be the new councilors in 1996 were academics in various fields, such as law, political science, and public administration. Only a few had been bureaucrats within the IFE or were open supporters of one party over another.¹⁶

All parties were now allowed access to media outlets during campaigns, which would be monitored to promote less biased coverage. The General Council of the IFE was transformed into the head of a large and powerful bureaucracy: one that was responsible for overall electoral management of all federal elections through 2014—and since that date, its responsibilities have grown to include several activities at the municipal and state levels. Citizen councilors were designated to head the large bureaucracy of the IFE (which later became the INE in 2014 after another substantive reform). The IFE-INE¹⁷ is now responsible for renewing the voting rolls, printing the ballots, educating citizens about their right to vote, emitting a voting card that

¹⁵ Interview with former president of the PAN, Luis Felipe Bravo Mena, March 28, 2019.

¹⁶ See Estévez *et al.* (2007) for more on how the councilors in the first and part of the second General Council voted during their term in office.

¹⁷ The IFE’s name was changed due to yet another major reform in 2014 to the Instituto Nacional Electoral or INE.

acts as an official identification, distributing funds to parties, monitoring campaign spending, training the citizens who will manage the voting stations, printing the ballots, and setting up voting stations. It can sanction parties for a variety of offenses.

The Electoral Tribunal is a second, separate agency, which is responsible for adjudicating among the different actors and parties. In the reforms of the early 1990s, the Tribunal was placed within the judicial branch of government, giving it more power as it is able to determine legal precedent in electoral matters and it is the ultimate authority in all electoral disputes. Over the course of six to ten years, it grew in power and influence as it began to adjudicate matters relating to the internal decisions of the parties (Martín, 2012b).

The autonomy of the electoral authorities seemed assured thanks to the new rules: the councilors could not be removed without cause (originally, their period in office was seven years, which was later increased to nine)¹⁸ and they were not permitted to have been members of a party for at least three years prior to their appointment to assure their political independence. The bywords of the new, autonomous Council that grew out of the 1996 electoral reform were “impartiality, certainty, independence, and autonomy”.¹⁹ If the main goal of the reform was to procure formal autonomy of the two organizations (IFE and the Tribunal) from the executive, that goal was met. The selection of the IFE councilors was matched by the careful process of choosing the ministers of the Electoral Tribunal, and expanding their period in office, allowing them greater autonomy from the demands of the executive.

The 1997 mid-term congressional elections, the 2000 presidential elections, and the 2003 mid-terms were considered great democratic achievements for Mexico, not only for the victorious parties, but also for the autonomous electoral institutions that were created through negotiations among the three main parties throughout the 1990s and consolidated in 1996. After the 2000 elections, however, party leaders realized that their understanding of the relation between the electoral authority and themselves was incorrect: it appears the leaders of the party organizations believed they had put in councilors to protect their interests, while many of the councilors believed that —*even if a specific party had promoted their candidacy*— their duty was to treat each party equally and use the law to punish cheating. That is, most of the councilors would refuse to punish party A for spending more than the legal limit while allowing party B to do the same. In fact, after the transitional 2000 presidential race, in which the PRI lost the executive office for the first time since its creation, the councilors found serious breaches of spending regulations, both by the former hegemonic PRI and the newly installed party of the president, the PAN.

¹⁸ The President of the Council was placed for six years with the possibility of second period if re-elected.

¹⁹ Interview with Mauricio Merino, January 30, 2019.

Both parties were investigated, found to be guilty of accepting illicit sources of finances and overspending, and fined heavily. Both protested before the Electoral Tribunal and eventually lost their respective cases and were forced to pay. The fine for Pemexgate was approximately double for what Mexico's oil giant had transferred to the PRI's presidential campaign, leaving the PRI to pay more than a 1 billion pesos (US\$97 million) (Morris, 2009). After the loss of the presidency, this fine crippled the PRI until the 2003 mid-term elections. As for Amigos de Fox, the PAN was fined 498 million pesos, just over half as much, which came to about US\$50 million (*Nexos*, 2006).

The General Council of IFE made up of these members, which lasted from 1996-2003, was considered the most autonomous, independent, and fair of the all the IFE Councils to that date, but the main parties would not stand to be slapped with huge fines again.²⁰ In the next selection process of the next General Council of IFE in 2003, the two parties that had been penalized decided that placing even more closely matched councilors was a better way to defend their welfare, and if they could exclude the nominees of the party of the PRD, whose principal candidate was seen already as the front-runner for the 2006 presidential race, then all the better.²¹ Thus, the first Council was a success because its members were at times willing to vote against the party that had sponsored them. But this success later led to a backlash against the autonomy of the IFE that made this possible.²²

The crisis of EMB autonomy

Party leaders had both the means and common interests to manipulate or ignore electoral laws, and did so in several ways: first, leaders of the three major parties selected more closely matched agents in the IFE in 2003 and Electoral Tribunal in 2006. Second, after the disastrous 2006 elections, they made it clear they were willing to “fire” the councilors, pressure them to quit, or extend their terms during their period in power, which the PRI government did to the Tribunal magistrates.²³ Third, they wrote electoral laws and regulations that could be easily manipulated in practice. These actions were taken to bypass the campaign spending limits they imposed on themselves. Most parties continued to overspend on elections, while accepting money from other public functionaries and even more illicit sources.

²⁰ Interview with former councilor, Jacqueline Peschard, March 6, 2019.

²¹ Interviews with a former candidate for councilor José Antonio Crespo, March 2019, with Mauricio Merino a former councilor up to 2003, March 2019, with José Woldenberg, the leader of the CG through 2003, March 2019.

²² As Peschard explains, the parties did not want to be sanctioned for their wrongdoing; they did not appreciate the good that an independent third-party enforcer could provide. Interview, March 6, 2019.

²³ Party leaders in the Chamber of Deputies twice simply refused to vote on new members of the General Council of the IFE in 2007 and 2013, which left the EMB weaker (there are no sanctions for not voting in new councilors in the prescribed time).

Their strategy was to overspend and then pay the fine, which would never again be a true burden as it was due to the elections of 2000.

One should note that the party leaders were willing to accept IFE's work in a myriad of administrative and logistical tasks that do not affect their ability to spend or erect barriers to entry to the party system. As one can see in Table 1, entire areas of electoral authority activities that were set up during the 1990s continue to be acceptable to the parties, such as the voters' registry, voters' identification card, civic education, and managing citizens' participation in the voting stations on election day. The text in italics refers to rules that restrict entry to the party system or in some way imply duplicitous party behavior.

From Table 1, one can see how parties in congress together with different executives, negotiated important changes to the electoral rules, which they later ignored or manipulated. These changes lend credence to the argument that party leaders cooperate to exclude outside political actors, while they compete and cheat to win votes. One can also see that in the "reversal" section, that in certain instances, new party leaders had to revoke or rework recent reform measures because of their consequences.

Because the Council members placed in 2003 had no citizen councilors who were linked to the leftist PRD, it was regarded as an EMB without the necessary balance among the three major parties, and several of those appointed had little knowledge of electoral matters, or were open supporters of one party or another.²⁴ As a result, it was difficult to argue that the Council could work impartially to interpret and enforce the electoral laws, *even if it did in practice*. This simple fact would come back to haunt the IFE in 2006, with an extremely close outcome, the PRD could reasonably question the impartiality and fairness of every move made on the part of the Council because their party had not been able to place at least one councilor.

As one former electoral councilor stated, "the parties protected their interests by filling the Council with councilors who acted as "transmission belts" (*corredores de transmisión*)—that is, councilors who were expected to protect the interests of their specific party in the Council, rather than the institution or election integrity.²⁵ However, as the same councilor pointed out, many councilors did not behave in way—not all protected "their" party's interests. Still, a delicate balance between the Council and the parties was broken in 2003, and as a result of this and the backlash against the Council in 2006-2007, the parties were able to partially capture the IFE. Through hiring and firing practices, changing the length of tenure, threatening budget cuts, making constant changes to electoral law, the parties sent a clear message: do not

²⁴ Reportedly, the new president councilor, Luis Carlos Ugalde, had been a supporter of the PRI. Another councilor, Virgilio Andrade, accepted his PRI affiliation. The PAN, however, voted in favor of these new councilors.

²⁵ Interview with Jacqueline Peschard, March 6, 2019, Mexico City.

sanction us with the full force of the law even if we made the law; and even if we overspend or accept money from illicit sources. With such enormous quantities of both legal and illicit resources flowing through the parties' coffers, vote buying became more substantial over time (Hagene 2015; Greene and Simpser, 2020; Lawson, 2009).

The reforms of 2007-2008 were at least in part an answer to the difficult campaign and post-election period of the 2006 presidential elections. The PRD's Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) officially lost the election by a margin of 0.62 per cent of the national vote, but believed he had been robbed of certain victory because the PAN's candidate, Felipe Calderón, had placed spots asserting that López Obrador was a "danger for Mexico", because business groups had placed advertisements that criticized the left-wing candidate, and because the IFE refused a full recount. The PRD also complained that the media conglomerates had consistently charged them higher rates for advertising space than they did the PAN or the PRI.

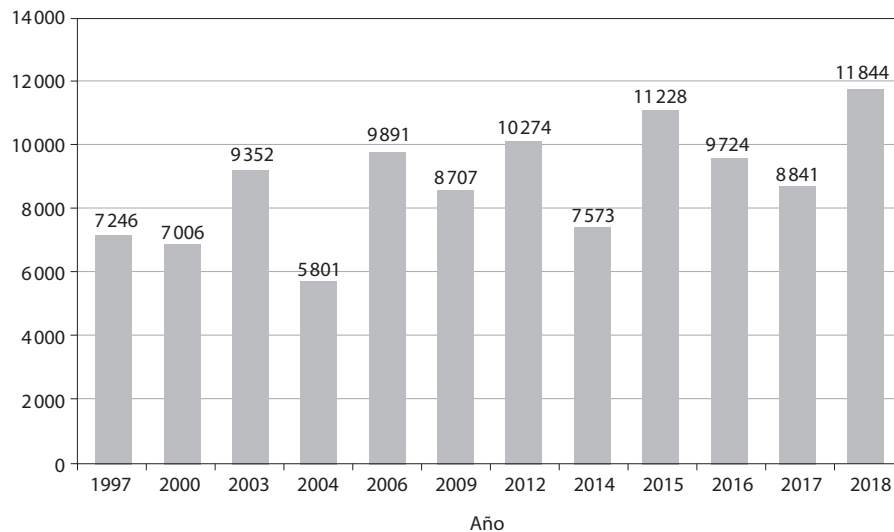
To keep the PRD and its firebrand leader within the bounds of the political system, the parties in congress negotiated a profound restructuring of how parties could accede to mass media during campaigns, particularly radio and television. The reform dictated that parties and candidates could no longer pay for campaign advertisements in federal elections. Instead, the electoral authority would manage the placement of all advertisements, and the television and radio companies were obligated to place them on the air as "public service announcements", that is, for free. This new plan was also supposed to lower the costs of campaigns, although it is not clear this actually occurred, as Figure 1 below demonstrates.

It is not clear that the party leaders understood the consequences this new rule would have on their ability to run modern, reactive campaigns using spots in television that do not annoy the average voter, which lends credibility to an explanation based on limited rationality and unforeseen consequences.²⁶ Based on this point, one must recognize while party leaders did work intentionally to close off competition in the party system in many instances, they also had to negotiate as humans with cognitive limitations.

The selection of councilors (as well as the magistrates of the Tribunal) was changed to a staggered calendar to afford better transitions between two CGs. At the same, however, leaders of the PRD demanded the removal of the president of IFE's General Council because of his perceived bias during the electoral process. As a result, several councilors, including the president of the council, either resigned or lost their posts. This was the clearest indication to that date that the party leaders were willing to break the autonomy of the electoral authority when they saw fit.

²⁶ Interview with then senator Roberto Gil of the PAN (March 2014), who complained bitterly about the changed and stilted nature of campaigning due to this new rule.

FIGURE 1. Public financing for parties in Mexico, 1997-2018, in tens of thousands of MX pesos



Source: Ugalde and Casar (2018).

The parties also decided to construct a new Accounting Unit (Unidad de Fiscalización) whose chief was decided by the president of the Council and voted in with a majority of the Council. The new Accounting unit took auditing powers away from the direct purview of the Council supposedly so its tasks could be carried out in a more professional and less politicized manner. It was meant to keep the thorny issues of financing from mixing with the other matters that the Council and the parties had to solve. But this autonomy from the Council caused problems in 2012 and the Unit was later returned to the Council in the 2014 reform. As one former council mentioned, once the Auditing Unit was brought back into the Council, INE was again able to place significant fines.²⁷ Again, we see that some decisions were not successful and were later reversed.

From Figure 1, above, it becomes clear how well financed the parties are, both during the campaign season and in those years without campaigns. The national parties received MX\$1 1844000000 in 2018, which is roughly \$90 million dollars divided unequally among the registered parties and coalitions. Though the parties receive such hefty sums of public financing, they still refuse to respect the spending limits, and are willing to paying fines placed by the electoral authority once the election is over and these fines never again approached \$1 billion pesos of 2000.

²⁷ Interview with Arturo Sánchez, March 13, 2019.

While most analysts see the 2007 as a response to the 2006 elections, the party leaders took advantage of the negotiations to punish smaller parties. On the new ballots, instead of a single option with all the coalition partners included, each party would have its own box and emblem for the voters to select, along with the name of the coalition. Before this reform, it was impossible to know how many votes each party in a coalition won because they were placed together on the ballot. Now, the big three would know how much of their coalition's overall vote share came from the smaller parties, and how much came from their own supporters, making it easier for the smaller electoral organizations to lose their registration.²⁸

Second, new parties could attempt to win registration only every six years, instead of every three, making it more difficult to gain access to funding and media time. This move clearly had a target: those citizens or political leaders who wished to compete under a different party label against the big three, which reduced entry into the party system. The parties passed another new rule which allowed the parties to claim that any candidate selection process was open and democratic, a rule that made it more difficult to challenge the parties' selection practices.

To sum up the effects of the 2007-2008 reform: first, many of its most important proposals were a reaction to the perceived failures of the elections of 2006; second, the party leadership took advantage of the reform to place many other, lesser known articles that in fact, reduced the ability of ambitious office seekers, new parties, and activists to participate in the party system. The leaders of the major three parties were willing to negotiate changes to the use of media in campaigns and prohibitions on free speech to appease one of their own. But they also used their congressional majorities to further their shared interests in blocking new entrants and reducing the number of players.

The Federal Electoral Tribunal is far less studied than its administrative counterpart,²⁹ the IFE-INE; yet, its judicial decisions are now the last word in all issues relating to elections. At first, the Tribunal was a court of appeals for some of the decisions made by the IFE-INE regarding elections. However, in a few short years, the magistrates of the Tribunal extended, via judicial action, the scope of their authority to all areas of electoral activity, in effect, overtaking the IFE-INE in its area of action and becoming the judge of last resort (Martin, 2007). With this, the parties realized that the IFE-INE was no longer the most important authority and began appealing the most important decisions to the Tribunal almost automatically. In the

²⁸ Woldenberg notes that this change lowered the costs of negotiation for the larger parties, March, 2019. Yet, after 2007 reform, the pot of public money no longer increased with the arrival of a new party, as it had before. Rather, the total amount remained the same and each registered party got a share of this total, giving the large parties strong incentives to close down the party system to smaller options.

²⁹ One of the few book length treatises in English on the Tribunal is Eisenstadt (2004).

early years, the Tribunal worked closely with IFE-INE, but over time, their relations became more antagonistic. The Tribunal began to send almost everything back to the IFE for review, so the parties would semi-automatically repeal the IFE's findings. Finally, the Tribunal began to revoke the rulings of the IFE-INE, not just return them to be improved, which gave the Tribunal more power to oppose the INE and to strategically assist certain parties over others, especially if a party were holding the executive.

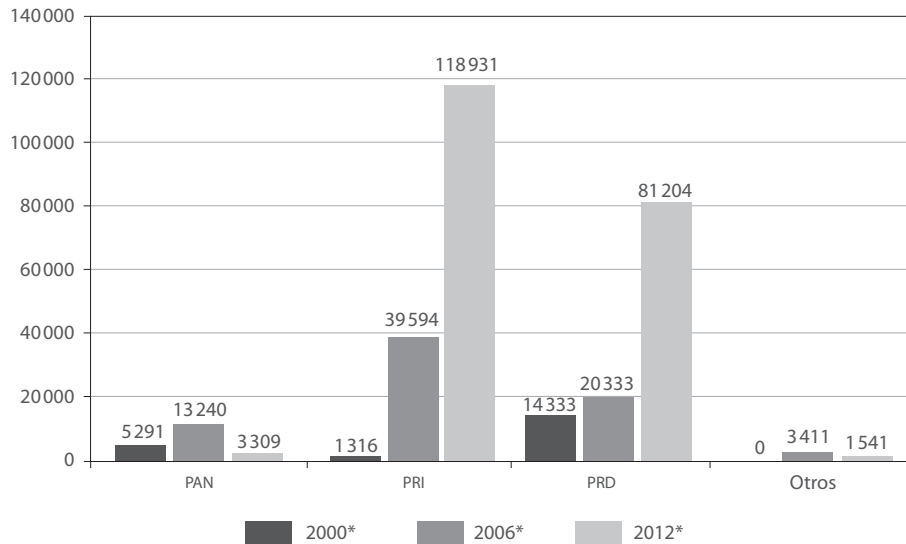
This, however, would eventually cause the Tribunal grave problems as the parties in 2006 chose their allies to become magistrates. The open jostling to place party allies in the Tribunal had two major effects—constant wrangling between the two agencies of the EMB and a greater deterioration of the independence of many of the decisions of the Trife. One of the most questionable decisions of the Tribunal was its authorization of Jaime Rodríguez Calderón's place on the 2018 presidential ballot at an independent candidate (supported by the PRI to draw off votes from other candidates), despite proof that he had gathered signatures illegally. On the same day, the Tribunal handed down a decision to prohibit Armando Ríos Piter from competing as an independent because he had not complied with these same rules. Pressure exerted by the parties and the executive eventually weakened the agency to such an extent that the president in 2019 was able to oblige the president of the Tribunal to relinquish her leadership post because she did not support the president in a decision. Newspaper attacks against supposed corrupt acts taken by magistrates in the Sala Superior became common; and enormous pressure to support the executive in questionable decisions.

It is interesting to note that the parties and the executive had more success at controlling many decisions of the Tribunal than they did in the INE signaling that the party leaders and the executive were not captured to the same degree. This fact made the work of the INE councilors more difficult, as decisions handed down by the IFE's Council could be challenged by the Electoral Tribunal, which became beholden to executive interests. Actual impeachment of the leaders of the two organizations turned out to be unnecessary—the pressure that congress (or the executive) brings to bear is normally enough to obligate an unmanageable councilor to step down from her post.

ELECTORAL REFORMS OF 2012 AND 2014

Once again, the changes to the electoral law in 2014 began with electoral problems in a previous race. In the mid-term federal elections of 2009, media elites and NGOs complained bitterly about the behavior of parties in power and during elections (Hernández, 2015: 126). The complaints became even stronger when several respected political commentators called for a null vote campaign to demonstrate to Mexico's party elite that it had to open up to new members and to end its collusive

FIGURE 2. Fines on parties set by IFE-INE, in thousands of MX constant 2000 pesos



Source: Cristalinas (2014, chp 11). *In coalitions. Constant 2000 MXP. *Note:* This figure does not include fines from Friends of Fox (498 million MXP) or Pemexgate (1 billion MXP) from 2000.

behavior.³⁰ To meet the criticisms of elite political commentators and several non-governmental groups, the presidency and party leaders at the end of the Calderón administration (2006–2012) negotiated several initiatives that were signed into law in April, 2012 that permitted independent candidacies, referendums, and consecutive reelection.³¹ A further and even more profound restructuring of the electoral authority was carried out in the 2014 electoral reforms and formed part of the *Pacto por México* under then-president Enrique Peña Nieto of the PRI.

The 2012 presidential elections brought to light one of the greatest problems of the Mexican electoral system—spending far more than the legal limit. This also created pressure to once again modify how parties are audited. The parties in Congress passed three new laws; a new party law, a new law that regulated electoral crimes; and the law that undergirded the activities of the new electoral authority—now called INE.

As can be seen from this figure, the PAN is by the far the least likely—if not to cheat—then to get caught over-spending, while the PRI and the PRD were the least trustworthy in terms of following spending rules. However, some interview subjects state that the PRD is less able to track its own spending. In the 2012 elections,

³⁰ Hernández (2015: 126) reports that the null vote campaign was successful. Almost two million null votes were cast in the mid-term elections of 2009 *versus* just under 850,000 in the mid-terms of 2003.

³¹ The enabling laws were not passed for federal elections, however, until 2014.

the PRI took money for its presidential campaign that had been incorrectly reported as spending for the federal legislators (senators and deputies) so Peña Nieto would not be charged with overspending. Furthermore, the candidate of the PRI and his campaign did not report roughly MX\$85 million pesos. So, in fact, the IFE did catch many offenses, but not all, or could not prove them all (Urrutia, 2013: 8).

One of the worst examples of illicit spending in 2012 was the PRI's massive scheme to distribute debit cards to its operators in certain districts in 2012 to be exchanged for votes, called the Caso Monex (*Aristegui Noticias*, 2012). It was discovered that the parties did not report what they disbursed on the day of the election for their representatives, and such spending would have breached the spending limits (Cristalinos, 2014: 222). If all parties were obligated to spend under a certain amount, then all would gain the benefits of perceived fairness, at the same time they would not have to spend so much money on campaigning. When asked about this, former party leaders who were interviewed responded that short term interests defeated long term benefits.³² However, it is important to note that the PRI was never found guilty of wrongdoing in this case, under the argument that it was not clear that the money was actually meant to buy votes.

Because of these recurrent problems with campaign spending, the parties once again sat down in 2014 to negotiate a way to both strengthen the INE by creating a new system of campaign accounting and councilor selection (Solís Acero, 2018). A new accounting platform allows campaign spending to be monitored in real time (Solís Acero, 2018: 62). Finally, election results can be thrown out if a campaign is found to have overspent in a close election by more than 5 per cent, among other activities. The problem is that actually revoking the election is ultimately a political decision on the part of the Tribunal.

In this same reform, the parties —led by the PAN— announced that they would centralize much of the power of the state electoral institutes to the national electoral authority. The goal behind this centralizing move was to weaken the PRI governors' hold over their state electoral authorities. A complete centralization was watered down, but the name, Instituto Federal Electoral, was changed to the Instituto Nacional Electoral (INE) and the Institute was assigned yet more tasks, such as selecting the councilors of the new State Electoral Organisms, now called the OPLES, and using the INE to track spending for all elections, instead of only federal races.³³

The 2014 reforms also opened the party system to new actors. These modifications were extensive and included independent candidacies (which had not been permitted since 1946), consecutive reelection for a variety of posts (prohibited at all

³² Interviews with Luis Felipe Bravo Mena, March, 2019, and Gustavo Madero, March, 2019, both former leaders of the PAN.

³³ The OPLES are still in charge of local elections, but if they ask for INE's help, certain tasks can be carried out by the national authority.

levels for all offices since 1933), and new quotas for women candidates. However, at least two of these reforms have been seriously weakened. For example, the new law requires that the candidates be re-nominated by the same party that selected them for their first term in office (unless they leave their party within a specific period before the next election). Independent candidates (those who do not hold party registration) are now allowed on the ballot and given public financing. However, in practice, the parties—especially in the state assemblies—wrote laws that they manipulated in both the national and subnational arenas, such that independent candidates are rarely on the ballot and are not able to compete successfully (Hernández, 2015). Finally, in the 2014 reforms, the parties actually raised the barrier to legislative representation from 2 to 3 per cent of the national vote, making it more difficult for the smaller parties to maintain their registry.³⁴

From the review of the electoral reforms and the implementation of the rules from 1996 onward, we know that party leaders and the executive have incentives to negotiate with other major parties to capture the regulator, to make laws they can later manipulate, and to ignore many of the rules they write to force themselves to comply. Over the past several years, Mexico's parties followed non-cooperative spending strategies in almost all elections because they knew they would not be fined as excessively as they had been for their 2000 activities. The changes to the 2003 IFE negotiations, the changes in the Tribunal, and the ability of the parties and the executive to place their favorites as regulators all led to this outcome. On the other hand, for topics that do not imply spending, the parties comply with the electoral authorities. Finally, as suggested above, the parties kept the party system closed to new entrants through their control over electoral laws, which the authorities were then forced to apply. Still, it is noteworthy that the parties also reversed some of their decisions that had unintended consequences (under new party leaders). Thus, these are not mutually exclusive causes: parties both intentionally limit, restrain, and weaken, while they also make mistakes and try to remedy them.

Party leaders and the executive have successfully weakened several of the bases of EMB autonomy. They were able to force out the sitting president of the Consejo of the IFE in 2007; they lengthened the tenure of the magistrates on the Tribunal after they had taken office. In 2018, the executive reportedly pressured the president of the Tribunal to relinquish her post (although she remains a magistrate). Together, these manipulations lead one to see how constant pressure and rule changes allowed the parties and executive to at least partially capture their enforcer.

Yet, the lack of representation and fair play had consequences for the parties and their candidates. The terrible cataclysm of the 2018 elections has perhaps altered

³⁴ See Hernández (2015) for an examination of the problems of independent candidates and consecutive reelection after the 2014 reforms.

the party system for good. This system-wide rejection of traditional parties was not only due to the relentless corruption and impunity of the Peña administration or the inability or unwillingness of the opposition parties to stop it. Rather, voters rejected most of the candidates of the three major parties and turned to López Obrador and Morena because of the mountain of political failures that piled up since 2000. Terrifying homicide rates; a lack of sufficient economic growth; and rising prices (together with stagnant wages) also damaged the reputations of the parties as did newspaper reports of their wrongdoing. The shorter-term gains of institutional change were overwhelmed by long-term losses when Morena used corruption debate as a central issue against the three major parties in 2018.


While at least part of the reason for Morena's wide-ranging victories in municipalities, states, and of course the federal legislature and the presidency was the traditional parties' lack of compliance with their own rules, the new administration of AMLO seems even less willing to strengthen the electoral authorities than its predecessors, in large part because it wants to continue to win races with huge margins to remain in power. For example, in 2019, the president's party in congress threatened to reduce the term in office of the president of the CG of the INE from nine to three years, which would be applied retroactively to the sitting president (*Animal Político*, 2019). If this type of institutional weakening continues, the EMB will be less likely to act against the president's interests, perhaps leading to worse outcomes.

CONCLUSIONS

Both the INE and the Tribunal are well-financed, professionalized bodies that help the nation carry out dozens to hundreds of elections each year. Ballots are printed, voting stations are set up, advertisements are placed, judgements are handed down, and resources are distributed and accounted for, among many other important duties of the two agencies. However, during more than 20 years, Mexico's major parties and the executives chose a mix of cooperative and non-compliant strategies, even when it became clear that this mixed strategy would eventually harm their own interests. This paper has delved into the issue of short-term gains, and the beliefs of the groups in power that they would be able to deny entry or at least minimize the risks of admitting other actors into the game of electoral politics. The dual nature of the relation among Mexican parties—competing with each other to win elections and control resources while at the same time colluding to rebuff the participation of new actors—created an environment in which it was far more beneficial to capture the regulatory agency and write exclusionary laws to block or weaken representation.

The parties in congress have constantly made constitution and legal changes to the electoral system. When the EMBS carry out the new laws, however, the parties often complain that the authorities are not performing fairly or completely, and that

they allow the other parties to overspend or carry out other duplicitous behavior. But it is difficult for the electoral authorities to limit non-compliant behaviors in part because of how parties select the councilors and in part because the councilors know the party leaders can punish them through new laws, budgetary restrictions, and attacks in the media. Another factor that is constant across time is that parties castigated certain groups: the activists and ambitious office seekers within their own parties; regular voters; and women, whom they were very reluctant to nominate to winning districts. The worst result is that even when outsider actors are benefited by new rules, in practice the parties found ways to reduce their participation and influence.

Party leaders miscalculated the willingness of the voters to permit the constant cheating at the same time they misread the growing power of the leader of today's largest party, Morena. It remains to be seen which among the three parties survives this latest test. However, the party in power continues to wreak havoc on the electoral rules and the authorities that are paid to implement them. Of course, many questions remain, mostly dealing with variation among parties, variation over time, and the different strategies parties would take in the same election or electoral reform to further their interests. 

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Candidates Murdered in Mexico: Criminal or Electoral Violence?

Víctor Antonio Hernández Huerta*

ABSTRACT: The 2018 electoral process in México was not only the largest electoral process in Mexico's history by the number of positions to be filled, but also it was the most violent in recent history. Since the beginning of the electoral campaigns until the election day, 48 candidates were assassinated. What explains this unprecedented wave of political assassinations? Are they caused by a close electoral competition or by criminal violence? By using an original database in which we recorded the number of candidates assassinated by municipality, we tested both competing theories and found that the killings are not related to competitive elections, but instead they are linked to the presence of criminal organizations and to the level of criminal violence in each municipality. In some states, such as Puebla and Guerrero, statistical evidence also suggests that the murdered candidates were targeted by criminal organizations.

KEYWORDS: elections, political assassinations, electoral violence, criminal organizations.

Candidatos asesinados en México, ¿competencia electoral o violencia criminal?

RESUMEN: El pasado proceso electoral no solamente fue el más grande en la historia de México, por el número de cargos de elección popular a elegir, sino también el más violento. Durante el proceso electoral federal 2017-2018 se registró el asesinato de 48 precandidatos y candidatos en todo el territorio nacional. ¿A qué se debe esta ola de asesinatos políticos sin precedente en la historia de México? ¿Los asesinatos deben atribuirse a condiciones de competencia electoral, o más bien pueden vincularse con actividades de organizaciones criminales? Usando una base de datos original en que registramos el número de candidatos asesinados por municipio, sometemos a prueba ambas teorías complementarias y encontramos que los homicidios no están relacionados con elecciones cerradas o competidas, sino que están ligados a la presencia de organizaciones del crimen organizado y al nivel

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de violencia criminal en cada municipio. En algunos estados, como Puebla y Guerrero, la evidencia estadística también sugiere que los candidatos asesinados fueron el blanco de ataques de organizaciones criminales.

PALABRAS CLAVE: elecciones, asesinatos políticos, violencia electoral, organizaciones criminales.

INTRODUCTION

The federal electoral process 2017-2018 was characterized not only for had been the largest in Mexico's history for the number of popularly elected positions that were elected,¹ but also for had been the most violent. From the beginning of the process, on September 8, 2017, until the end of the campaigns on June 27, 2018, 48 pre-candidates and candidates were assassinated throughout Mexico.² Undoubtedly, the issue of electoral violence, in particular the murders of candidates for the 2018 federal and local elections, was one of the topics that attracted more media attention during this election. The Organization of American States (OAS), the European Union delegation in Mexico, together with the embassies of Norway and Switzerland, expressed their concern about violence and intimidation during said electoral process. Various political and social actors also expressed their concern about the murder of candidates. In the current context of widespread criminal violence, it is worthwhile asking whether we can still affirm that “On the shiny surface of Mexico's democracy, things by and large seem fine” (Schedler 2014: 10), or whether we are witnessing the beginning of a “societal [criminal] subversion of democracy”.

What was behind this unprecedented wave of political assassinations? Does the violence respond to incentives of electoral competition, or can it be attributed to criminal organizations? Our argument is that the murders of candidates observed in Mexico in 2017 and 2018 are not the result of fierce political competition between political parties, because unlike other electoral systems, in Mexico access to power

¹ In the election of July 1, 2018, 3406 popularly elected positions were contested. The president of the Republic, 500 federal deputies, 128 senators, 16 mayors in Mexico City, 1596 municipalities, 972 local deputies, eight governors, one head of government of Mexico City, and 184 other local officials were elected (Integralia Consultores, 2018).

² The list of murdered candidates was drawn up by crossing information from two reports published in *El Universal* (“Find out. Who are the candidates killed during the electoral process?”) And in *Animal Político* (“Dying to be on the ballot”) and the Seventh Report on Political Violence in Mexico prepared by Etellekt Consultores. The lists agree on the number of candidates killed and only differ in details such as the candidate's middle name or the way they are spelled. Once it was verified from various sources that the count of murdered candidates and pre-candidates coincided, a final list was integrated with the names of the candidates and the following data was searched online: municipality in which the candidate competed, municipality in which his murder occurred, state, position to which he aspired, date of the murder, age and sex of the candidate, which political party / coalition won on July 1 in the municipality in which the murdered candidate was competing, if there are indications of that in his campaign the candidate used a discourse against the drug trafficker, if the candidate sought reelection, and to which party did the murdered candidate belong. Said information with links to its sources was stored in a 46-page appendix. The appendix is available at: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/ngppombeqkvn5pj/Anexo.%20Candidatos%20asesinados%20en%20M%C3%A9xico%202018.pdf?dl=0> [accessed on: September 5, 2018].

and political competition has largely followed the institutional path. Instead, the murder of candidates can be attributed to the activities of criminal organizations in the municipalities in which the murders occurred. Our statistical evidence suggests that in some states the candidates were among civilian casualties in the midst of criminal violence that the country is experiencing; however, in the states of Puebla and Guerrero, it is possible to affirm that the murdered candidates were targeted by criminal organizations. The phenomenon of electoral violence also seems to be a local phenomenon, since most of the victims were competing for positions at the municipal level. In a democracy in process of consolidation it is important to determine if the deaths of candidates had their origin in political processes, that is, whether they are the product of a process of institutional weakening in which political actors from enclaves of sub-national authoritarianism resort to murder as a strategy to perpetuate themselves in power; or, whether the murders are the product of contexts of criminal violence.

Therefore, this article has two objectives. First, distinguishing whether the wave of murdered candidates is rooted in political motivations based on electoral competition, or if they are the result of strategies undertaken by criminal organizations. During the electoral process, two possible hypotheses were discussed as potential causes of the ongoing murders. The first related to electoral competition. In other parts of the world it has been observed that electoral violence arises particularly in situations in which elections offer a real possibility of changing existing power relations, and it is precisely in closed elections in which politicians have incentives to make use of violence. The second hypothesis that was put forward was that criminal organizations could have used political assassinations as a strategy to politically capture state officials, and thus obtain a comparative advantage over other criminal organizations. Second, after identifying that the assassination of candidates is related to the presence and operation of criminal organizations, we set out to determine whether the murdered candidates were a specific target of the criminal organizations, or if they were victims of the environment of generalized violence, that is rampant in many areas of the country. To do this, we use an exact binomial test to test the hypothesis that candidates at the state level are more likely to be killed than the general population.

This article is organized as follows. First, we review the literature on crime and electoral violence, and the incentives that both criminal organizations and political parties have to make use of it. Then, after a thorough review of the press and the literature, we present some theoretical expectations about the causes of the murders of candidates in Mexico, that is, whether they are due to electoral competition or if they are related to the activities of criminal organizations. Next, we present a quantitative analysis of the municipalities that are located in states that suffered at least one murder of pre-candidates or candidates (710 municipalities excluding

Oaxaca), in order to test both narratives and to identify the political and social patterns that are correlated with the murders of candidates. In the conclusions, we present the research findings and the implications for the quality of democracy.

ELECTORAL VIOLENCE: ELECTORAL COMPETITION OR CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS?

Electoral violence has two main meanings. Firstly, it can be understood as a subset of activities within a larger political conflict, most of the time as part of a trajectory of ethnic violence within divided societies (Fjelde and Höglund, 2014; Wilkinson, 2004). Secondly, it can be related with the intentional use of force as a strategy to influence electoral results (Hafner-Burton *et al.*, 2014; Höglund, 2009). Electoral violence is usually employed by two main actors; first, by governments and political parties—to remain in power or to harm their contenders— (Hafner-Burton *et al.*, 2014; Höglund, 2009); and second, by criminal groups that seek to intimidate their opponents or to support allied politicians and thus obtain protection for their illegal activities (Albarracín, 2018; García-Sánchez, 2016; Ley, 2018; Ponce, 2019; Trelles and Carreras, 2012). Depending on who is the perpetrator, electoral violence will have different logics because it serves different objectives.

First, we will examine electoral violence exerted by governments or by political parties. Incumbent parties can resort to various electoral manipulation strategies, perhaps the most extreme of which is the use of violence. Electoral violence arises particularly in situations where elections offer a genuine possibility of changing existing power relations. Therefore, political parties facing closed elections will have greater incentives to promote violence as a mean of gaining power (Höglund, 2009, Strauss and Taylor, 2009). In addition, there are other factors that interact with electoral competition and that promote the use of violence; for example, an incumbent party has incentives to use pre-electoral violence if it anticipates an unfavorable electoral result and if there are also weak institutional controls on the executive (Hafner-Burton *et al.*, 2014). For example, in Africa, incumbent parties have been associated with the use of political violence, especially in systems with poorly consolidated democracies (Onapajo, 2014; Strauss and Taylor, 2009) and with weak institutional controls (Onapajo, 2014).

In addition to electoral competition, there is also a link between electoral violence and electoral rules. Majority electoral systems are prone to generate violence in places where ethnic groups have been systematically excluded from power and where there are significant economic inequalities. In contrast, the proportional representation rules make it likely that even ethnic minority candidates will commit to respecting the rules of democratic competition, as these electoral rules guarantee them a minimum of representation to remain in the electoral arena until the next election (Fjelde and Höglund, 2014). A minimum of political representation reduces the incentives of political parties to resort to electoral violence.

For their part, criminal organizations also have incentives to get involved in electoral processes. Not only in Mexico, but in other parts of the world such as Italy (Alesina *et al.*, 2016; Dal Bó *et al.*, 2006; Daniele and Dipoppa, 2017), Brazil (Albarracín, 2018) and Colombia (García-Sánchez, 2016) there are examples of how criminal groups get involved in political affairs. It is usually assumed that criminal organizations act mainly motivated by economic interests; for example, to defend and control criminal markets (Osorio, 2015). However, they also act motivated for political ends, or in reaction to political variables.

The literature recognizes at least four reasons why criminal organizations attack sitting politicians or candidates. First, traffickers around the world usually avoid open confrontation, and prefer less visible techniques (such as corruption) to minimize the impacts of police action and law enforcement; but when the state undertakes repressive measures indiscriminately, drug traffickers respond by violently attacking state agents (Lessing, 2015).

Second, turf wars between different criminal organizations induce cartels to change the balance of the electoral game in order to capture state agents, and thereby gaining an advantage to control the market. Politicians can become the target of criminal violence when they decide not to cooperate with criminal organizations and instead they fight illicit markets (Albarracín, 2018). Consequently, criminal groups use violence to instill fear among voters and negatively affect voter turnout (Ley, 2018; Trelles and Carreras, 2012), often with the purpose of reducing the chances of victory for political opponents in areas over which they exercise territorial control (García-Sánchez, 2016). In extreme cases they try to eliminate electoral competition through threats or assassinations of rival politicians (Albarracín, 2018; Daniele y Dipoppa, 2017; Ponce, 2019). It is worth mentioning that criminalized electoral politics, in which there is an intentional use of force by criminal groups to influence politics, is predominantly a local phenomenon. Criminalized electoral politics may occur at the national or regional level, but a weak rule of law and limited accountability to civil society are required to make it attractive to criminal groups (Albarracín, 2018).

Third, armed groups can attack sub-national authorities in an attempt to extract economic resources from local governments (Cubides, 2005), and use them to strengthen their military presence (Chacon, 2018). This rent capture strategy is activated only if the amount of resources they can extract exceeds the costs of corrupting or coercing the authorities (Dal Bó *et al.*, 2006). Finally, drug trafficking organizations can reap multiple benefits if they manage to capture sub-national elections: greater facilities for the transport of illegal drugs, fewer obstacles to money laundering, intelligence information, achieving protection from the local police, and even getting support from the police to combat rival organizations (Ponce, 2019). For this reason, electoral cycles, particularly electoral campaigns, stimulate

violence since it is more costly for criminal organizations to capture sitting politicians, who in theory have greater police protection, than candidates seeking power (Ponce *et al.*, 2019). Consequently, Mexican cartels take advantage of the opportunities offered by local electoral cycles, when some politicians are vulnerable because of the lack the protection from central government authorities, and decide to attack mayors or candidates to gain control over local governments and thus are able to establish subnational criminal governance regimes (Trejo and Ley, 2019).

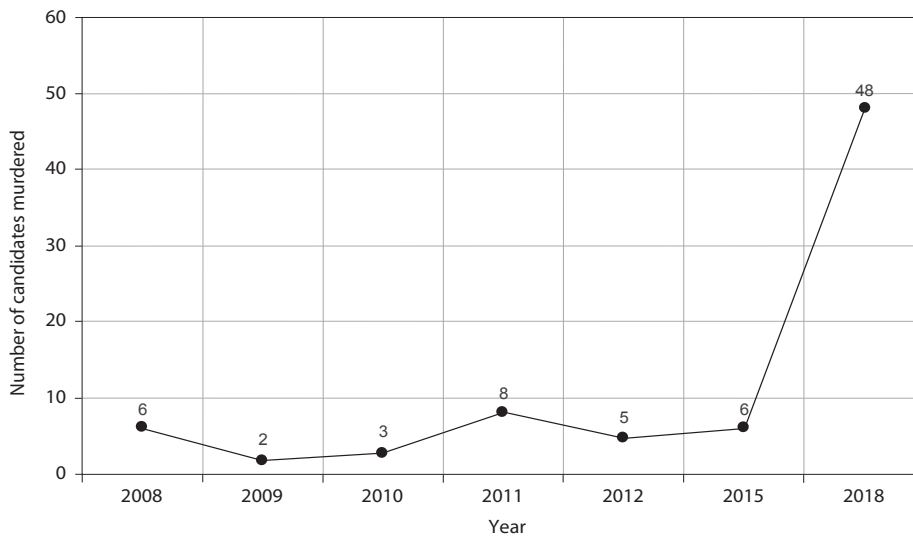
CANDIDATE'S MURDERS IN MEXICO

During the 2017-2018 electoral process, various actors expressed their opinions about the possible causes of the wave of candidates murdered in Mexico. In a press conference offered on May 27, 2018, the secretary of the Interior, Alfonso Navarrete, assured that the candidate murders were not linked to ideological reasons or to a fierce electoral competition, and “that among the causes of these homicides were disputes between criminal organizations, and issues of a personal and family nature” (Salgado, 2018). For his part, Rubén Salazar, director of Etellekt, a consultancy firm that developed a detailed count of attacks against candidates in 2017-2018, stated that a possible explanation for the murders was that “democracy is no longer the tool to settle differences in political competition” and that violence is being used “as the most effective resource to obtain public office and to get rid of opposition candidates” (EFE, 2018). Which of the two narratives best fits the causes of candidate killings? Should they be attributed to the conditions of electoral competition, or to the activities of criminal organizations?

A first approach to the causes of the murders of candidates and pre-candidates in Mexico is to make a general description of the main characteristics of the victims. As indicated in footnote number two, the data we use on candidate killings comes from reviewing newspaper notes.³ The count we carried out showed that between September 8, 2017 — the beginning of the federal electoral process — and June 27, 2018 — the end of the electoral campaigns — 48 politicians were assassinated; 20 were already officially registered candidates and 28 were pre-candidates.⁴ If we compare the 2018 figure with other federal and local electoral processes of the last ten years in Mexico, we will observe a dramatic growth in the number of murdered

³ It is true that journalistic reports only attest to what has been declared by those who carry them out and, in this sense, it is necessary to wait for the conclusion of the procedures in which the corresponding authority determines if they were accredited or not; however, we chose to use this source of information because they allow us to have a first approximation of the events that occurred —in particular, the count of murders— without having to wait for the judicial processes to conclude. Furthermore, the most common practice of studies that study criminal violence is to use journalistic notes as the main input for the elaboration of their databases; See for example Osorio (2015), Trejo and Ley (2018, 2019).

⁴ As of June 22, 2018, the INE reported the death of “41 people murdered among pre-candidates and candidates for popularly elected positions” (INE, 2018).

FIGURE 1. Candidates assassinated in Mexico: recent evolution

Source: Integralia Consultores (2015).

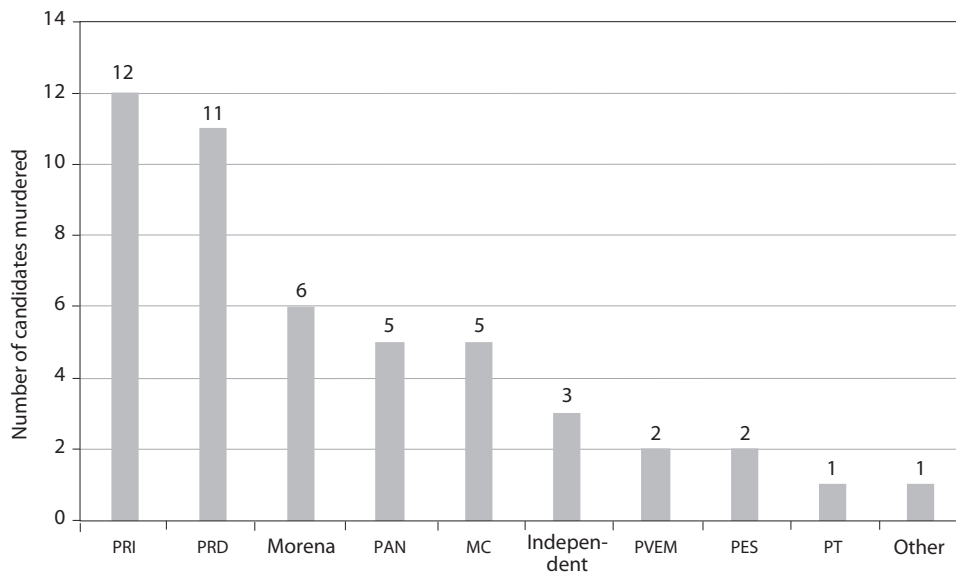
candidates. In previous electoral processes (federal and local) the number of murdered candidates ranged from two to eight (Figure 1).

Out of the 48 assassinated politicians, 26 aspired to a municipal presidency, eight to be local legislators, 10 to a local council and two more to be a federal legislator. These figures, in accordance with the literature (Albarracín, 2018), show that the victims were mostly candidates for positions at the local level. On the other hand, the figures of these murders show that, from the total number of murdered candidates, 41 were men and seven were women. This makes us suppose that the murders are not entirely random. If they were, we would observe a similar proportion of murders between men and women. This, because in Mexico it has been possible to postulate the same proportion men and women as candidates as a result of the adoption of gender quotas and, more recently, by the adoption of gender parity (Freidenberg and Alva, 2017).

Regarding the political affiliation of the victims, 12 belonged to the PRI, 11 to the PRD, six to Morena and five to the PAN (Figure 2). Since practically all the political parties that nominated candidates for popularly elected positions were victims of political violence, it seems that political orientation is not a variable that can be associated with the occurrence of murders.

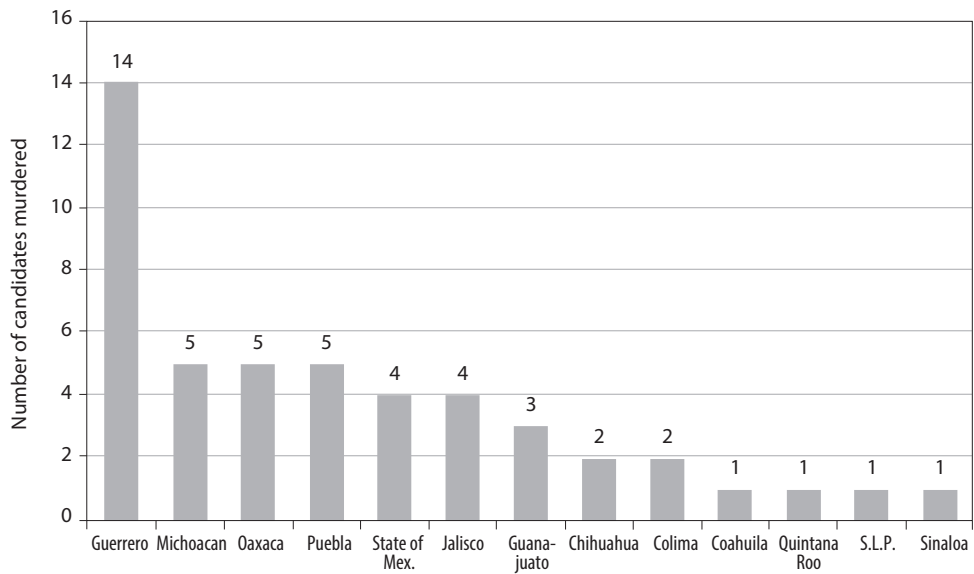
The state that registered the more candidates assassinated, according to the information gathered, was Guerrero, with 12; Michoacan, Oaxaca and Puebla follow with five murders each, and the State of Mexico and Jalisco with four murders (Figure 3). This suggests that the murders of candidates occurred mostly in the states most affected by criminal violence.

FIGURE 2. Candidates assassinated by political party



Source: Own elaboration from journalistic notes.

FIGURE 3. Candidates assassinated by state



Source: Own elaboration from journalistic notes.

The electoral competition hypothesis

As we previously said, governments and political parties can resort to electoral violence as a strategy to stay in power (Hafner-Burton *et al.*, 2013), especially in contexts of intense political competition (Höglund, 2009). Some murders of candidates in Mexico could fit this hypothesis. For example, Aarón Varela Martínez, Morena's candidate for the municipal presidency of Ocoyucan, Puebla, was assassinated on February 28, 2018. Although there are no clear lines of investigation, Morena militants stated before the media that they assumed that the death of Varela happened for political reasons. Ocoyucan has been under PRI control for almost three decades, with the support of Antorcha Campesina, and Aarón Varela was, in their opinion, the strongest political figure who represented a real possibility of ending PRI's dominance (Ayala, 2018).

Although the literature on political violence suggests that close or very competed elections can induce political actors to use violence as a mean to influence the electoral result; this may be less likely in the Mexican context. Firstly, because, as a result of a long historical-institutional process, political parties seem to have internalized that elections and not violence are the way to gain power, and secondly, because the party system in Mexico has showed for a long time a high degree of institutionalization (Greene and Sánchez-Talanquer, 2018),⁵ which in turn gives structure and stability to electoral-political competition.

The fact that the political parties internalized that electoral competition is the way to come to power is the product of a long historical process. After the revolution, Mexico experienced a period of political instability characterized by the use of violence to come to power. In 1920, 1923, 1927 and 1929 there were major rebellions against the executive branch and around the presidential succession. Mexico was essentially governed by numerous warlords, regional and local leaders. This situation began to change with the founding of the National Revolutionary Party in 1929. According to Jeffrey Weldon (1997), “[t]he party was designed to prevent military revolts and electoral civil wars among members of the revolutionary family” (p. 247). The new party coordinated the selection of candidates for most of the popularly elected positions and also guaranteed that those who competed under the party's flag were elected; both elements were a strong incentive to avoid desertions within the revolutionary family. The result was that “by 1935, we have evidence that the main element of institutionalism, discipline, had permeated all layers of power” (Lajous, 1979: 657).

The second reason why we think that electoral competition is not related with the assassination of candidates, is that institutionalized party systems give structure and stability to party competition, which in turn makes interactions between parties

⁵ Despite the fact that between 1990 and 2015 the party system in Mexico was the second most institutionalized in Latin America, it is possible to wonder if a deinstitutionalization process is beginning due to the entry of MORENA in the electoral arena (Greene and Sánchez-Talanquer, 2018).

more stable and predictable (Mainwaring, 2018). Likewise, as previously mentioned, electoral violence is less frequent when a country reaches higher levels of democratic stability and institutionalization (Hafner-Burton *et al.*, 2014; Onapajo, 2014). The party system in Mexico is relatively well institutionalized compared to other Latin American countries. This institutionalization had its origin in a competitive electoral system, although flawed in favor of the PRI. Like other authoritarian regimes, the PRI preferred to gain power through regular elections (though not entirely free and fair) instead of closing the electoral arena. These regular elections created succession mechanisms that helped stabilize power relations between political contenders because they encouraged them to compete through the party label instead of taking up arms (Greene and Sánchez-Talanquer, 2018). Both elements of institutionalization, which originate from the time of the PRI's domination, make it less likely that political parties resort to arms as a way to come to power, even in cases of closed or very competed elections. From the above, we deduce the following hypothesis:

H1. In Mexico, greater electoral competition will not be related to a greater occurrence of murder of candidates.

The criminal violence hypothesis

The literature on criminal violence recognizes that criminal groups can make use of violence against state agents, firstly as retaliation for government attacks (Lessing, 2015); second, to intimidate their political opponents (Albarracín, 2018; Ponce, 2019) or to punish politicians who do not provide them with the expected protection (Albarracín, 2018; Daniele y Dipoppa, 2017; Ponce, 2019); third, in order to capture rents that they can use in their war against other criminal organizations (Cubides, 2005; Chacón, 2018; Dal Bó, 2006); or finally, as a strategy to capture candidates when they are in a vulnerable situation—during campaigns and when they lack the protection of the central government (Ponce, 2019; Trejo and Ley, 2019).

An emblematic case in which criminal organizations appear to have resorted to violence against candidates is the murder of Fernando Purón Johnston, candidate to the Lower House by the PRI, in the 1st district of Coahuila. Purón had been mayor of Piedras Negras between 2014 and 2017. His administration was characterized by a frontal fight against criminal organizations, in particular against *Los Zetas*. During his campaign as a candidate for federal deputy, he had already received some threats. He was assassinated on June 8, 2018, as he was leaving a debate between candidates that took place in the Accounting Faculty of the Autonomous University of Coahuila, Piedras Negras campus. There, he had spoken out harshly against organized crime. After his murder, the Coahuila government captured the material perpetrators of Purón's murder and confirmed that it was planned and executed by members of criminal organizations (Agencia Reforma, 2018).

TABLE 1. Murders attributed to organized crime

Name	Municipality	State	Position
Fernando Purón Johnston	Piedras Negras	Coahuila	Federal deputy
Abel Montufar Mendoza	Pungaranato	Guerrero	Local deputy
Liliana García	Ignacio Zaragoza	Chihuahua	Local council
Guadalupe Payán Villalobos	Ignacio Zaragoza	Chihuahua	Mayor
Dulce Nayely Rebaja Pedro	Chilapa	Guerrero	Local deputy
Antonia Jaimes Moctezuma	Chilapa	Guerrero	Local deputy
Francisco Tecuchillo Neri	Chilapa	Guerrero	Mayor

Source: Own elaboration from journalistic notes.

Other cases, in which possibly criminal organizations were behind the murders, are presented in Table 1. Note that three of them occurred in Chilapa—in the Low Mountain of Guerrero—, one of the most violent regions in the country, in which two groups dispute the control of the poppy-producing area: “Los rojos” and “Los ardillos”.

The increased presence of criminal organizations seems to be positively related to the incidence of murder of candidates and pre-candidates. This for several reasons: first, there is evidence that a greater number of criminal organizations operating in a municipality is associated with higher levels of violence related to criminal groups (Osorio, 2015), and with murders of “politicians who are caught in the middle of resulting narco-conflicts” (Blume, 2017: 67). It has also been documented that increases in violence between criminal organizations in one territory are positively associated with an increase in violence between criminal organizations in neighboring areas (Osorio, 2015). Both, the direct effect of the number of criminal organizations and the spillover effect of violence could affect the safety of candidates who participate in politics in these areas. Therefore, the following hypothesis can be derived:

H2a. The greater the number of criminal organizations present in a municipality, the greater the probability that assassinations of candidates will occur.

Given that the most recent indicators on the number of criminal organizations we possess date back from 2012 (Coscia and Ríos, 2012), we also include the number of homicides as an alternative measure of criminal violence. The number of homicides is the measure most frequently used in studies of violence. According to Ponce (2019: 234): “The main advantage of this measure is its consistency and

simplicity on how rates of violence are calculated across time”. In other cases, the murder rate may also be an indicator of the presence of criminal organizations. In Italy, for example, “the homicide rate in regions with a mafia presence is always much higher than in regions without a mafia presence” (Alesina *et al.*, 2016: 18). Therefore, we should observe the following relationship:

H2b. The higher the rates of violence in a municipality, the greater the probability that assassinations of candidates will occur.

DATA AND METHODS

To test the above hypotheses, we carried out a quantitative analysis at the municipal level in all the states in which murders of candidates occurred in the 2017-2018 electoral process. This represents 909 municipalities in 12 states of the country (see Figure 3). The municipality was chosen as the unit of analysis since most of the assassinated candidates aspired to positions at the local level (mayors, councilmen, and local deputies); only one candidate for a federal office (federal deputy) was killed.

To carry out the analysis, we included two alternative measures of the dependent variable. First, we have a dichotomous variable that identifies whether or not the murder of at least one candidate or pre-candidate occurred in the municipality in question. This variable takes the value of one if at least one murder occurred, and zero otherwise. The second measure of our dependent variable is a count of the number of candidates killed by municipality. In some municipalities, such as Chilapa, up to three murders of candidates occurred in the past electoral process (Table 1A, in the appendix, shows the descriptive statistics of the variables used).

The measures of the independent variables are three. First, the number of criminal organizations that operate in each municipality to test the hypothesis about the impact of organized crime organizations on the murders of candidates (Coscia and Ríos, 2012). Second, we include the homicide rate per 100 000 inhabitants per municipality, reported in the first half of 2018, just before election day, as a proxy for criminal violence.⁶ This variable is continuous and its values range from 0 to 131 homicides per 100 000 inhabitants. Third, our electoral competition measure is instrumentalized as the subtraction of the percentage of votes obtained by the first place minus the percentage obtained by the second in the 2018 municipal elections.⁷

⁶ We included the number of intentional homicides with a firearm reported by the Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System, between January and June 2018. *Incidence of Municipal Crime Figures*, 2015, December 2018: <https://www.gob.mx/sesnsp/acciones-y-programas/datos-abiertos-de-incidencia-delictiva?state=published> [accessed on: March 8, 2019].

⁷ The electoral data was obtained from the pages of the electoral institutes of the 12 states compared. Originally, electoral competition was measured as the difference between first and second place in the immediate municipal election prior to 2018 (Coahuila 2017, Colima 2015, Chihuahua 2016, Guanajuato 2015, Guerrero 2015, Jalisco 2015, Mexico 2015, Michoacan 2015, Puebla 2013, Quintana Roo 2016, San

The controls included in the analysis are variables that the literature has identified as possible predictors of electoral violence, in particular for the murders of candidates. The first control has to do with the functioning of the institutions in charge of imparting justice and the presence of a rule of law. An efficient legal system orders social relations, but its absence or the “brown areas” with less state presence lead to problems of governability (O’Donnell, 2004) and insecurity (Aguirre and Herrera, 2013). To measure the impact of the institutional strength and presence of the state, we included the number of officials of the Public Prosecutor’s Office at the state level.⁸

It has also been argued that alternation in the governor’s office can produce higher levels of violence, as the rotation of parties in the state government erodes informal protection networks that had facilitated the operation of organized crime organizations under unified governments (Trejo and Ley, 2018). To test this effect, we include a dummy that identifies the states in which there was an alternation before 2018. Likewise, it has been argued that political violence is more common at the local level and in smaller communities (Albarracín, 2018; Daniele y Dipoppa, 2017), therefore we include a variable that measures the percentage of the population that lives in populations with less than 2 500 inhabitants.⁹ Additionally, we include the incidence of robberies at the municipal level, measured with the number of robberies with violence of passers-by on public roads.¹⁰ This variable was included because in the press review we observed that in some cases the murders of the candidates were the product of robbery with violence, so it could be assumed that a higher incidence of robberies at the municipal level is positively related to the murder of candidates. Finally, we include the Municipal Human Development Index to control for structural factors of violence such as quality of life.

Statistic analysis

The hypotheses stated above were tested using two types of statistical models. First, logistic regression models to explain the presence or absence of political assassinations at the municipal level (models 1 and 2). Since we also want to identify which variables affect the number of candidates assassinated by municipality, we

Luis Potosi 2015, Sinaloa 2016). However, due to the changes in the levels of electoral competitiveness that may occur between the previous election and the 2018 election, we chose to use the 2018 results as our measure of electoral competition.

⁸ Synthesis of municipal statistics on security and justice. National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI). State and Municipal Database System (SIMBAD): <http://sc.inegi.org.mx/cobdem/> [accessed on: March 8, 2019].

⁹ National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI). State and Municipal Database System (SIMBAD): <http://sc.inegi.org.mx/cobdem/> [accessed on: March 8, 2019].

¹⁰ Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System, data from January to June 2018. Incidence of Municipal Crime Figures, 2015 - December 2018: <https://www.gob.mx/sesnsp/acciones-y-programas/datos-abiertos-de-incidencia-delictiva?state=published> [accessed on: March 8, 2019].

TABLE 2. Candidates murdered in Mexico

	Murders occur Logit		Number of murders Negative binomial	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Number criminal org.	0.372*** (0.0716)	0.307*** (0.0845)	0.362*** (0.0837)	0.326*** (0.0986)
Homicide rate 2018	0.0278*** (0.00679)	0.0228*** (0.00393)	0.0342*** (0.00885)	0.0255*** (0.00359)
Margin of victory	0.0109 (0.0124)	0.0210** (0.00980)	0.00305 (0.0113)	0.0157** (0.00750)
Number of prosecutors	-0.0600 (0.0389)	-0.0367 (0.0269)	-0.0777* (0.0444)	-0.0552* (0.0334)
Alternation	0.508 (0.378)	0.577 (0.399)	0.788* (0.430)	0.785* (0.468)
Rural population	-0.00986 (0.00719)	-0.00875* (0.00525)	-0.0119 (0.00748)	-0.0106* (0.00586)
Robberies	0.000165 (0.00154)	0.000339 (0.00152)	0.000230 (0.00137)	-0.000165 (0.00135)
IDH	-1.016 (1.984)	-1.862 (4.549)	-3.074 (2.966)	-2.210 (4.595)
Constant	-2.8054 (1.5276)*	-2.3456 (3.2772)	-1.2317 (2.2964)	-1.9718 (3.3680)
N	897	897	897	897
Prob > chi ²	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Pseudo R ²	0.1046	0.0786	0.1032	0.0848

Source: Own elaboration. Standard errors clustered by state in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

also used negative binomial models that have as a dependent variable the number of murders that occurred in each municipality (models 3 and 4). Additionally, we make a distinction between the municipality in which the candidate was murdered (models 1 and 3), and the municipality in which the candidate was competing (models 2 and 4). We proceeded in this way since in some cases the candidate was not killed in the municipality for which he was competing, but in a neighboring municipality.

The results of regressions 1 and 2 (Table 2) reveal that the occurrence of candidate killings is closely related to the activities of criminal organizations. Thus, the greater the number of criminal organizations operating in the municipality, the greater the probability that murders will occur in the municipality in question. Furthermore, the rate of intentional homicides with a firearm in the municipality

is an important predictor of the occurrence of candidate killings. Despite finding this significant positive relationship between our two indicators of criminal organization activities with the murders of candidates, it is still necessary to use alternative investigative methods to clarify the causal mechanism by which this relationship is observed. One mechanism that can explain this relationship is that criminal organizations preventively eliminate candidates that they believe may affect their illicit activities if they are elected or that criminal organizations carry out a settling of scores with politicians involved in criminal activities, or with politicians who do not cooperate with them. Another possible mechanism is that candidates die as a collateral damage in the midst of an environment of criminal violence. The only thing that we can affirm from this statistical analysis is that a greater presence of criminal organizations has a statistically significant impact on the occurrence of candidate killings.¹¹

The variable of political competition does not show a statistical association with the occurrence of murders in the municipality in which the homicide took place (model 1), but surprisingly higher margins of victory are positively related to the occurrence of murders in the municipality in the one in which the candidate competed (model 2). It is logical that narrow margins of competition do not affect the municipalities in which the murders occur, but that its effects are felt in the municipalities in which candidates were competing; however, what should be observed is that greater electoral competition—narrower margins of victory—would make murders more likely to occur.¹² When we use the margin of victory observed in the immediate election prior to the 2018 election as a measure of political competition, there is no statistical association with the occurrence, nor with the number of murders.

Since the logistic regression coefficients cannot be directly interpreted, a simulation was performed to estimate the changes in the probability of occurrence of murders, keeping the rest of the variables at their mean values.¹³ When the number of criminal organizations operating in a municipality is zero, the probability that at least one murder of a candidate occurs in that municipality is 2.10 per cent, *ceteris paribus*; when the number of criminal organizations increases for example to three,

¹¹ These results are robust to other specifications such as the logistic regression for rare events (King and Zeng, 2001) and the maximum penalized likelihood (Firth, 1993). Applying conventional binary regression models to analyze rare cases such as the murder of candidates (a dependent variable with a frequency of thousands of zeros and very few ones) can result in biased estimates, so it is necessary to use models that account for the behavior of the data. Therefore, alternative estimates were made using the routines proposed by King and Zeng (2001) and by Firth (1993).

¹² Additionally, the result of model 2 should be taken with reserve, since it is not statistically significant using the logistic regression for rare events (King and Zeng, 2001) and it is marginally significant ($p < 0.10$) using the maximum penalized likelihood (Firth, 1993).

¹³ The simulation was performed using the *margins* command in Stata.

the probability rises to 6.15 per cent; and if the number of criminal organizations reaches nine, which is the maximum value observed in the sample, the probability reaches 37.90 per cent. In models 1 and 2, which estimate the occurrence of candidate killings (logit regressions), none of the control variables was statistically significant, although all show the expected sign according to the theory. The only exception is the variable that controls for the percentage of inhabitants in each municipality who live in a rural area, which in model 2 shows a negative and significant relationship with the occurrence of murders.

The analyzes of the negative binomial regressions, which use the number of candidates killed by municipality as the dependent variable (models 3 and 4), are similar to the results of the logistic regressions, but have some differences regarding the impact of the control variables. There is also a significant statistical association between our two measures of the independent variable, with the number of candidates killed in each municipality and also with the number of candidates murdered in the municipality in which they competed. These findings reinforce the idea that the murder of candidates in the past electoral process in Mexico is a phenomenon that is closely related with the activities of criminal organizations. Unlike logistic regressions, the negative binomial analysis identifies a negative association between the number of public prosecutors and the number of murders. This suggests that a greater presence of the state, in particular of the institutions in charge of investigating crimes, has a decreasing impact on the number of candidates murdered. Some authors have already argued that the lack of institutions for the administration of justice, whether local or state, results in an institutional environment that contributes to impunity and violence (Aguirre and Herrera, 2013). In line with the findings of Trejo and Ley (2018), who report that political alternation and party rotation in state government are associated with an increase in violence between cartels, our results from models 3 and 4 show that the alternation in state governments is positively related with the occurrence of candidate killings. The rest of the controls seem to have no statistical relationship with the phenomenon studied.

As we previously mentioned, the variable of political competition was not significant in models 1 and 3 (logit and negative binomial for the municipalities in which the murders took place) and in models 2 and 4 (municipalities in which candidates competed) this variable resulted with an opposite sign to what was expected. To further analyze this relationship, we used logistic regression models for rare events and found that the political competition variable was not significant in any of the models. Similarly, we used a regression discontinuity approach as an additional robustness check for either identifying or ruling out any effect of the political competition variable. The discontinuous regression strategy is typically used to evaluate the impact of an intervention on a dependent variable. In sharp discontinuous regression designs, an observable variable Z_i is used as a continuous target-

ing variable that determines the eligibility to be included in the treatment or not, from a threshold z . “The discontinuous regression estimator is based on the observation that individuals just to the left of the threshold must be very similar to individuals just to the right of the threshold, except that the former participate in the program and the latter do not” (Bernal and Peña, 2011: 202).

In our analysis, we used the margin of victory as the Z targeting instrument, under the assumption that perhaps below a certain threshold in the margin of victory the murder of candidates was more likely to be observed. We included several z targeting thresholds (0.5, 2, and 5% victory margins)¹⁴ as a strategy to identify the sensitivity of the results to various thresholds. We also used degree one, two, and four polynomials to identify linear and nonlinear patterns on the slopes of the estimated lines. Finally, and following Dell (2015), we included tables with the values taken by the other variables that could affect the murders in the upper and lower neighborhoods at our different thresholds, to verify that the assumption of local continuity around the threshold was fulfilled (Panel A, from table A2 in the appendix). The discontinuous regression estimator was not significant with any of the different thresholds, nor with the estimates with different polynomials (Panel B, from Table A2 in the appendix). Therefore, using this method, it is not possible to attribute an effect to the electoral competition variable either.

VICTIMS OF GENERAL VIOLENCE OR THE TARGET OF CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS?

In the previous section, we established that the murder of candidates is related with the presence and operation of criminal organizations in their municipalities. However, this statistical relationship does not allow us to determine whether the murdered candidates were a specific target of criminal organizations or if they were victims of the environment of violence that exists in many areas of Mexico. The homicide rate nationwide in the first half of 2018 was 29.27 per 100 000 inhabitants, while the rate of murdered candidates and pre-candidates nationwide was 55.39 per 100 000 candidates. These figures indicate, at first glance, that during the 2017-2018 electoral process, more candidates died than ordinary citizens. This leads us to raise the following proposition:

P1. The probability of being murdered among the candidate subpopulation is greater than among the general population.

Following Bartman (2018), who analyzes the murder of journalists in Mexico, we used an exact binomial test to identify whether candidates at the state level are more likely to be killed than the general population. The exact binomial test evalu-

¹⁴ In other studies on criminal violence and electoral competition, a threshold of 5 per cent was used in the margin of victory (Dell, 2015).

ates whether there is a significant deviation from the binomial distribution. It is appropriate to use it when there are two discrete results for the same categorical variable, for example two different results for each state. The null hypothesis is that the ratio of successes equals a particular ratio. In this case, the test calculates the probability of observing k (or more than k) candidates killed in a state with a probability p of homicides for the general population, given that the probability of being killed would be the same for both candidates as for the general population (Equation 1). If the test is significant it indicates that the probability of candidates murdered differs from that of the general population.

$$P(K \geq k) = \sum_{i=k}^n p^i * (1-p)^{n-i} \binom{n}{i} \quad (1)$$

Where, n = number of candidates by state, p = probability of homicides of the population in the state, and k = number of candidates killed in each state. This estimation requires the number of candidates killed by state,¹⁵ the total number of candidates who participated in the electoral process in the state (Table A3, in the appendix),¹⁶ the number of homicides by state,¹⁷ and the general population by state.¹⁸

When we compare the homicide rates per 100 000 inhabitants with the rate of candidates assassinated, it turns out that the rate of murdered candidates is higher than that of the general population in the states of Quintana Roo, Colima, Guerrero, Puebla, Jalisco and Coahuila (Figure 4). However, in the states of Quintana Roo and Colima, there was only one candidate assassinated, so its apparent high rate of candidate homicides may be due to the fact that this single homicide is being weighted by a very small population of candidates. In the rest of the states the rate of murdered candidates is equal to or less than the rate of the general population.

To determine if these differences are significant we applied the exact binomial test. Table 3 shows the p -values of the exact binomial test for the 12 states in which assassinations of candidates and pre-candidates occurred in the 2017-2018 electoral process.¹⁹ The homicide rate differs significantly in only two states: Puebla and Guerrero. Therefore, in these two states, proposition 1 is confirmed: the probability

¹⁵ See footnote number two.

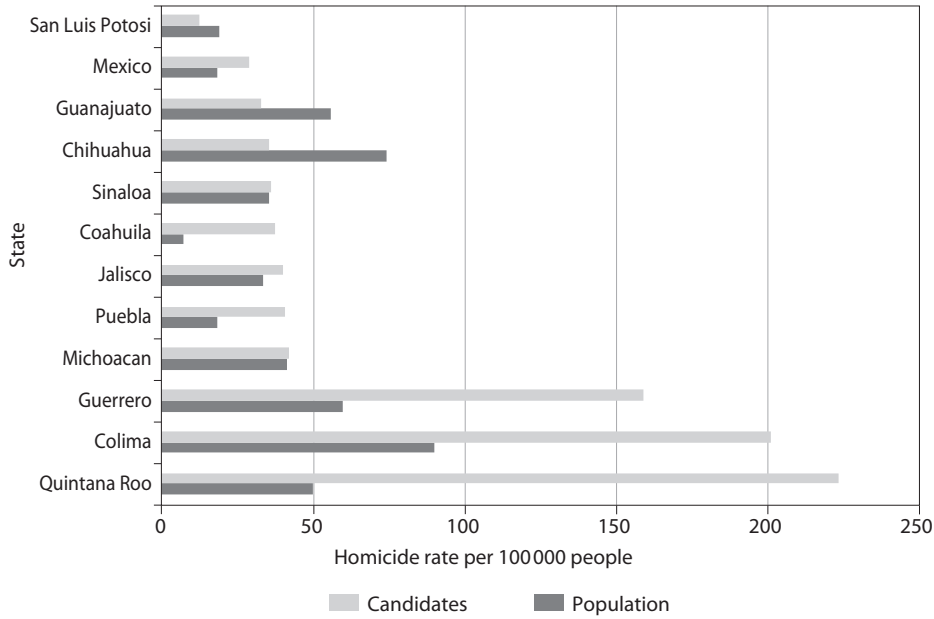
¹⁶ Information obtained from the electoral institutes of the states, for local candidates; and INE's information for federal candidates.

¹⁷ Report of deaths from homicide, by year, according to entity and municipality of occurrence. As of October 31, 2019, the 2018 information was updated with definitive figures, due to the completion of the processes for generating the registered death statistic, for said period: https://www.inegi.org.mx/sistemas/olap/consulta/general_ver4/MDXQueryDatos.asp?#Regreso&c= [accessed on: November 11, 2019].

¹⁸ Conapo, Demographic indicators 1950-2050, population estimates by state for the middle of 2018: <https://datos.gob.mx/busca/dataset/proyecciones-de-la-poblacion-de-mexico-y-de-the-states-entities-2016-2050> [accessed on: November 11, 2019].

¹⁹ Remember that in the analysis we excluded the state of Oaxaca.

FIGURE 4. Comparison of probabilities of homicides of candidates and the general population



Source: Own elaboration.

TABLE 3. P-values for the exact binomial test

	P-values
Coahuila de Zaragoza	0.1719
Colima	0.2252
Chihuahua	0.4574
Guanajuato	0.5041
Guerrero	0.0011
Jalisco	0.5868
Mexico	0.3278
Michoacan de Ocampo	0.8226
Puebla	0.0741
Quintana Roo	0.2006
San Luis Potosi	1.0000
Sinaloa	0.6296

Source: Own elaboration.

of being murdered among the candidate subpopulation is greater than among the general population. The states with the highest homicide levels are not *per se* the states that experience the most homicides against candidates in the Mexican elections. From the evidence presented in this section, we can conclude that the presence and operation of criminal organizations can produce the murder of candidates as a collateral damage, that is, that they do not necessarily focus on assassinating them; but in the states of Puebla and Guerrero, there is statistical evidence suggesting that the high murder rate of candidates was the product of strategies in which criminal organizations targeted candidates.

DISCUSSION


Electoral violence, understood as the intentional use of force as a strategy to influence electoral results, can be used by governments and political parties (Hafner-Burton *et al.*, 2014), as well as by criminal groups (Albarracín, 2018; García-Sánchez, 2016; Ley, 2018; Ponce, 2019; Trejo and Ley, 2019; Trelles and Carreras, 2012). The murders of the pre-candidates and candidates who participated in the 2017-2018 electoral process have multiple causes. Based on a statistical analysis of the municipalities located in the states affected by political violence, we find that the murders of candidates in the past electoral process are related to the presence (number) of criminal organizations and with the homicide rate in the municipalities where the murders occurred, as well as the same rate for those municipalities where the candidates competed. Considered together, the evidence gathered from reviewing of the press and the evidence from the statistical analysis suggest that organized crime activities are one of the most important variables behind the killings of candidates in the electoral process. Unlike other regions of the world, electoral competition does not appear to be a direct cause of the murder of candidates in Mexico.

Having established that the killings of candidates are related to the activities of criminal organizations, we proceeded to assess whether the killings are the product of a strategy in which the candidates are the specific target of criminal organizations, or whether their deaths may be attributed to the general context of violence in the country. In two states of the country (Puebla and Guerrero) we find that the murder rate for candidates differs significantly from that of the general population, and therefore it is feasible to assume that in those states the murdered candidates were the target of criminal organizations.

Additionally, the statistical analysis suggests that there is a negative relationship between the number of public prosecutors operating in each state—a proxy for state capacity—and the number of candidates murdered in each municipality. This indicates that a greater presence of state security agencies, particularly those in charge of initiating and directing criminal investigations on behalf of the state, may be an element that dissuades members of criminal organizations from carrying out

acts of violence against the candidates. Similarly, Trejo and Ley (2019: 2) also conclude that criminal organizations particularly attack and threaten politicians who “are politically and militarily unprotected by the central authorities.”

These findings allow us to argue that, as the costs of exercising electoral violence increase, with more agents in charge of activating and exercising criminal justice on the streets, the less likely that assassinations of candidates will occur. Conversely, when the costs of exercising electoral violence decrease, with more criminal organizations operating in a given municipality and a higher homicide rate, it is more likely that political assassinations will increase. If we consider both findings together, we could argue that electoral violence is primarily the product of material incentives to compete among criminal organizations and of a weak rule of law.

What are the implications of these findings for the quality of democracy? What is the role that criminal organizations will play in the short and medium term in Mexican democracy? Although it has been argued that criminal organizations have neither the means nor the intention to appropriate the state or its territory (Lessing, 2015), nor to model electoral governance institutions at their whim (Schedler, 2014), there is no doubt that the recent wave of murdered candidates has damaged the electoral arena. The security of local candidates in many states of the country does not seem to be guaranteed. If the fact that running for popularly elected positions at the local level in certain regions of the country represents a risk to the lives of the candidates: Who will run for office? Will the number and quality of candidates decrease? Ponce (2019) has found that the number of candidates decreases significantly in the most violent municipalities. Future investigations could also determine whether in the states most affected by the murder of candidates there is a decrease in the years of experience of the candidates, or in other indicators of their quality. Additionally, and thinking about designing public policies aimed at reducing the incidence of this problem, pilot programs could be implemented during electoral periods in which the presence of public prosecutors is increased in the areas most affected by violence against candidates. Although we observed a significant increase in the number of assassinated candidates in the 2017-2018 electoral process, we are still in time to contain its expansion and harmful effects. 

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APPENDIX

TABLE A1. Descriptive statistics

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Murder at municipality (<i>dummy</i>)	908	0.04	0.20	0	1
Number of murders at municipality	908	0.05	0.27	0	4
Murder at municipality at competition (<i>dummy</i>)	908	0.04	0.20	0	1
Num. Murders at municipality at competition	908	0.05	0.24	0	3
Num. Crim. Org.	908	0.84	1.34	0	9
Homicide rate (per 100 000 people)	907	9.07	14.97	0	131.7
Robberies first sem. 2018	909	12.06	67.88	0	1065
Margin of victory	906	11.87	10.93	0	75.64
Num. prosecutors (per 100 000 people)	909	7.43	5.93	2.5	24.8
Alternation	909	0.46	0.50	0	1
Rural population	907	52.58	33.23	0	100
IDH	902	0.681	0.063	0.42	0.846

Source: Own elaboration.

TABLE A2. Baseline characteristics

	A. Baseline characteristics (mean)			B. Fuzzy discontinuous regression estimators			
	Margin of victory (bandwidth)			Bandwidth = 0.5			
	0<MV<=0.5	0.5<MV<=1.0	t-stat on means difference		Grade 1 polynomial	Grade 2 polynomial	Grade 3 polynomial
Rural population percentage	44.321	53.979	1.100	RD Estimate	-0.15072	-0.26139	-0.48138
Num. Crim. Org.	0.793	0.714	-0.193	Standard error	0.13838	0.24172	0.44548
Homicide Rate	7.176	8.361	0.516	P-value	0.276	0.28	0.28
Robberies	10.276	2.643	-0.923	Bandwidth (h)	0.562	0.59	0.744
IDH	0.686	0.702	0.950	Num. Obs. Left	29	29	29
N	29	28		Num. Obs. Right	32	34	45
	Margin of victory (bandwidth)			Bandwidth = 2			
	0<MV<=2	2<MV<=4	t-stat on means difference		Grade 1 polynomial	Grade 2 polynomial	Grade 3 polynomial
Rural population percentage	50.192	56.272	1.387	RD Estimate	-0.02613	-0.00666	-0.06047
Num. Crim. Org.	0.911	0.728	-0.955	Standard error	0.05579	0.06469	0.06663
Homicide Rate	9.050	10.903	0.826	P-value	0.64	0.918	0.364
Robberies	9.854	6.699	-0.454	Bandwidth (h)	1.79	2.016	1.794
IDH	0.691	0.678	-1.629	Num. Obs. Left	109	122	109
N	123	103		Num. Obs. Right	86	105	86

TABLE A2. Baseline characteristics (continuation)

	A. Baseline characteristics (mean)				B. Fuzzy discontinuous regression estimators		
	Margin of victory (bandwidth)				Bandwidth = 5		
	0<MV<=5	5<MV<=10	t-stat on means difference		Grade 1 polynomial	Grade 2 polynomial	Grade 3 polynomial
Rural population percentage	53.578	51.954	-0.538	RD Estimate	-0.04118	-0.0337	-0.0009
Num. Crim. Org.	0.796	0.755	-0.348	Standard error	0.07979	0.11391	0.20203
Homicide Rate	9.566	8.419	-0.805	P-value	0.606	0.767	0.996
Robberies	8.857	7.815	-0.226	Bandwidth (h)	2.044	2.699	3.461
IDH	0.683	0.680	-0.462	Num. Obs. Left	105	140	181
N	280	216		Num. Obs. Right	97	131	160

Source: Own elaboration.

TABLE A3. Number of candidates in the electoral process 2017-2018

	Mayor*	Loc. Dep. (Plurality)	Loc. Dep. (PR)	Governor	Senator (Plurality)	Fed. Deputy (Plurality)	Total
Coahuila	2638				6	42	2686
Colima	728	168	81		6	12	995
Chihuahua	5 201	290	108		10	98	5 707
Guanajuato	8 603	276	144	5	10	152	9 190
Guerrero	8 036	558	156		8	60	8 818
Jalisco	9 406	275	153	7	12	208	10 061
Mexico (State of)	12 859	550	80		6	246	13 741
Michoacan	11 288	304	264		10	74	11 940
Puebla	11 488	274	308	5	10	150	12 235
Quintana Roo	418				6	24	448
San Luis Potosi	7 682	172	156		6	42	8 058
Sinaloa	1 018	228	270		8	46	1 570

Source: Own count with information from the state electoral institutes and from the INE for positions of federal election. *Includes candidates for municipal president, councilors and syndics.

Participation, Representation and Political Inclusion

Is There an Indigenous Vote in Mexico?*

Willibald Sonnleitner**

ABSTRACT: Deficient political representation of indigenous peoples stands out as a pending issue of Mexico's democratization, since they are among the most marginalized and discriminated sectors of one of the most diverse, multi-ethnic nations of Latin America. This contribution analyses the recent evolution and the persistent gap in indigenous legislative representation in Mexico. Then, the results of federal elections between 1991 and 2018 are scrutinized in order to identify patterns of voting behavior and trends in electoral turnout in indigenous polling stations, controlling by other socio-demographic variables. The conclusions highlight the inexistence of a specific indigenous vote, the political diversity of indigenous territories and their implications for public policies aimed at expanding indigenous representation and political inclusion.

KEYWORDS: affirmative action, indigenous voting, representation of ethnic groups, political inclusion of minorities.

Participación, representación e inclusión política: ¿Existe un voto indígena en México?

RESUMEN: Entre las asignaturas pendientes de la democracia mexicana, destaca el déficit en la inclusión política de las poblaciones indígenas, uno de los sectores más marginados y discriminados de una de las naciones pluriétnicas más diversas de Latinoamérica. Esta contribución analiza la evolución reciente y el rezago persistente de la representación legislativa indígena en México. Luego se estudian los resultados de los comicios federales entre 1991 y 2018, para identificar las tendencias de la participación y las orientaciones del voto en las secciones electorales indígenas del país, controlando por otras variables sociodemográficas. Las conclusiones destacan la ausencia de un voto específico y la diversidad política de las regiones indígenas, e invitan a repensar las políticas públicas orientadas a ampliar la representación e inclusión política indígena.

PALABRAS CLAVE: acción afirmativa, voto indígena, representación de grupos étnicos, inclusión política de minorías.

*Translation by Ana Pascoe.

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DOES THE INDIGENOUS VOTE MATTER?

Among the pending issues of Mexican democracy, the deficit in the political inclusion of indigenous peoples, one of the most marginalized and excluded sectors of the country, stands out. There is now a clear normative consensus regarding this issue, since it is widely recognized that the participation and representation of indigenous peoples is essential for their inclusion in the concert of voices and votes that define the politics of such a diverse and multiethnic nation like Mexico. However, despite the broad electoral participation of many indigenous communities, a noticeable lag persists in their legislative representation, a lag that is associated with multifaceted practices of discrimination and exclusion—economic, social and cultural.

For this reason, in November 2017, the National Electoral Institute (Instituto Nacional Electoral, INE) approved a general agreement to urge political parties to respect gender parity and to present indigenous candidates for federal legislative seats in twelve of the 28 single-member districts with more than 40 per cent of indigenous population (INE, 2017). In December of that same year, the Electoral Court of the Federal Judiciary (Tribunal Electoral del Poder Judicial de la Federación, TEPJF) ratified this agreement and expanded the compulsory candidacies to the thirteen districts with more than 60 per cent of indigenous population (TEPJF, 2017). On July 1, 2018, a historic advance was registered in the area of female representation, with the election of 49.2 per cent of female legislators in the Chamber of Deputies and 50.8 per cent of female legislators in the Senate of the Republic. In the case of indigenous political inclusion, however, the results found to be wanting.

Even with the new affirmative action measures, only seven indigenous candidates were elected in 2018. Instead of increasing, the number of elected legislators of indigenous origin went down—it had reached 18 seats in the Chamber of Deputies in 2006, after the creation of the 28 indigenous districts by the 2004 reforms. How can these apparently contradictory results be explained? Why was it not possible to increase the number of elected indigenous legislators? How are ethnic identities linked to the electoral behaviors of Mexicans? Who competes, and who wins in indigenous districts? How much do voters participate and how do they vote in indigenous territories? How can indigenous political representation be improved and expanded?

These questions—which I have been investigating within the framework of two projects¹—are more complex than they seem at first sight. Public policies of affir-

¹ The title of the first project is “The participation and political representation of indigenous Mexicans: From discrimination to the inclusion of native populations” and was supported by the Colmex Research Support Fund (FACI). The second project was promoted by Democracy, Human Rights And Security, A.C. and El Colegio de México, under the auspices of the 2017-2018 Electoral Observation Support Fund of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). It was entitled “Observing the

mative action promoted by the electoral authorities presuppose the existence of specific political demands that would be reflected, in turn, in a specific form of policy supply for indigenous peoples. The intersection of these supply and demand curves would thus translate into an indigenous vote. However, this hypothesis must be tested in order to be confirmed. In fact, the evidence collected in my research does not draw the conclusion that there is one electoral constituency in Mexico that is specifically indigenous, nor does it make it possible to prove that in 2018 there was a predominantly indigenous policy supply in the legislative districts with concentrated indigenous populations.

To explore this hypothesis, I analyze biographical data of the 105 candidates registered in the 28 indigenous districts for the 2018 election and compare the result with those of previous elections since 1988. Then, the results of the federal elections between 1991 and 2018 are analyzed to identify the trends of electoral participation and partisan voting in the indigenous electoral sections and to contrast them with those of the mestizo zones, controlling for other variables of territorial inequality and socio-demographics. The findings bring into question the hypothetical existence of an indigenous vote and call to reconsider public policies aimed at expanding indigenous political inclusion. In contrast to the premises of current affirmative action measures, the difficulty in capturing ethno-linguistic identities and their strong socio-territorial heterogeneity, the ambivalence of registration requirements and the low proportion of indigenous candidates in the federal districts with more than 40 per cent of native populations, as well as the plurality of electoral behaviors in the indigenous electoral sections, help explain the reduced number of indigenous legislators.

AN AMBIVALENT BALANCE: THE GAPS IN INDIGENOUS POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

Today, there is wide consensus on the need to recognize the cultural diversity and multi-ethnic nature of the Mexican Nation, and to guarantee the rights of indigenous peoples and communities.² Also, a widespread awareness has taken place regarding the urgency of improving the political inclusion of indigenous populations, through mechanisms that promote political participation and representation of a greater scope, efficiency and quality.

challenges of democratic inclusion in Mexico” and it included the participation of Sophie Hvostoff, Ulises Urusquieta, Arturo Sánchez, Arturo Alvarado, Manuel Jonathan Soria, Mariana Arzate and Norma García. I thank these institutions for the funding, and the colleagues for the rich intellectual exchanges.

² The new normative consensus is reflected in the reforms carried out over the last decades. These were embodied in the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States, as well as in other instruments of international law (ILO Convention 169, the declarations of indigenous rights adopted by the United Nations and by the Organization of American States). This jurisprudence lays the ground for the recognition of the pluricultural composition of the Mexican nation and of indigenous rights (TEPJF, 2014; Galván Rivera, 2014; Hernández Díaz, 2011; Hernández Narváez, 2010).

However, these new rights have not been implemented by all entities of the Republic and their results are counterintuitive as to the number of elected indigenous legislators. To date, the reforms have had ambivalent effects in terms of political inclusion and the lag in the area of legislative representation persists, despite sustained electoral participation by citizens, and indigenous peoples and communities. This is due, in part, to the internal heterogeneity and territorial dispersion of indigenous populations in many districts in which they are not a majority, as well as the ambiguity of the registration criteria and the characteristics of the policy supply in these districts.

The labyrinth of ethnicity

Before analyzing whether there is a specific policy supply for indigenous legislative candidates, it is necessary to clarify how this type of identities is conceived in the specific context of the country so that we can determine how to capture and measure them. This invites us to review the approaches that have been developed in this regard in history, anthropology, sociology and demography, with tools and concepts that are still under discussion.

What does it mean to be “indigenous” in Mexico?

There is a complex debate in social sciences on how to define ethnic identities. Ethnic elites always refer to supposedly objective criteria to highlight the characteristics that distinguish and separate them from other human groups. However, these attributes are frequently backed up with subjective differentiations that change according to the contexts in which they are stated. From this perspective, ethnic identities are contingent and situational, relational and inter-subjective socio-political constructions. Therefore, the representation of the socio-cultural features that are used to re-produce ethnic boundaries is much more important than the attributes themselves (Barth, 1969).

In Mexico, autochthonous peoples occupy a peculiar place in the symbolic construction of the Nation, since they are part of the constitutive myth that separated the Mexican from the Creole identity of the Spanish Conquerors. It is an identity highly valued in museums and collective memory, which serves as a central referent of otherness in the construction of miscegenation and of the “*raza cósmica*” (cosmic race), within a post-revolutionary project of assimilationist integration that also tactically associated it with barbarism and cultural backwardness. The word “indio” (indian) is used pejoratively to stigmatize inappropriate behavior, with a strong component of classicism that is not always or necessarily racial. The “indígena” (indigenous) concept, on the other hand, is used in a neutral way to designate the native populations, although it is still loaded with ambiguous and discriminatory connotations too. Hence the need to question some erroneous ideas strongly rooted in collective imaginations.

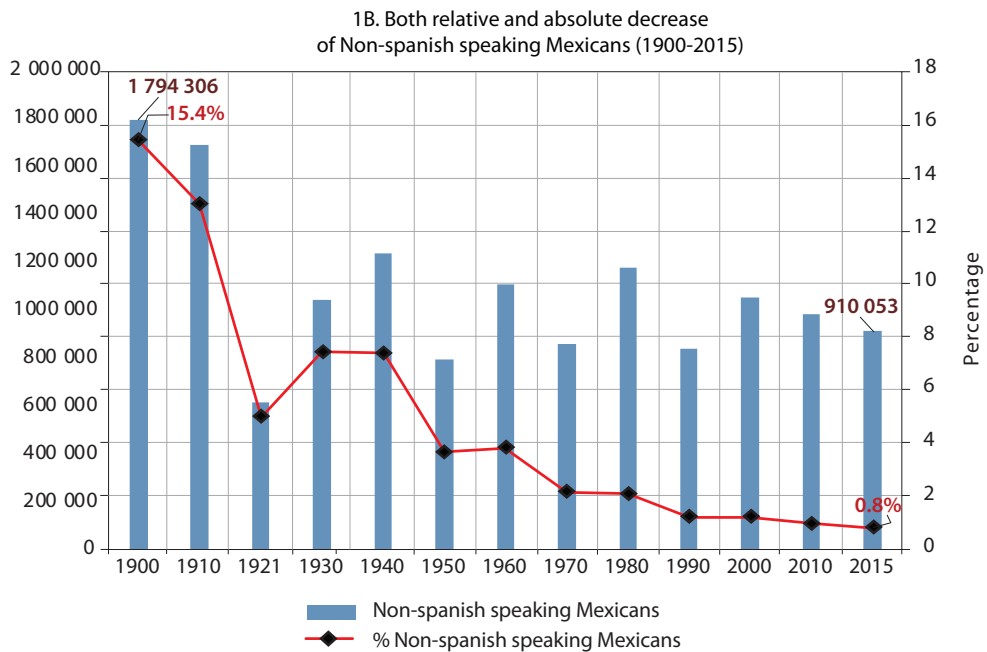
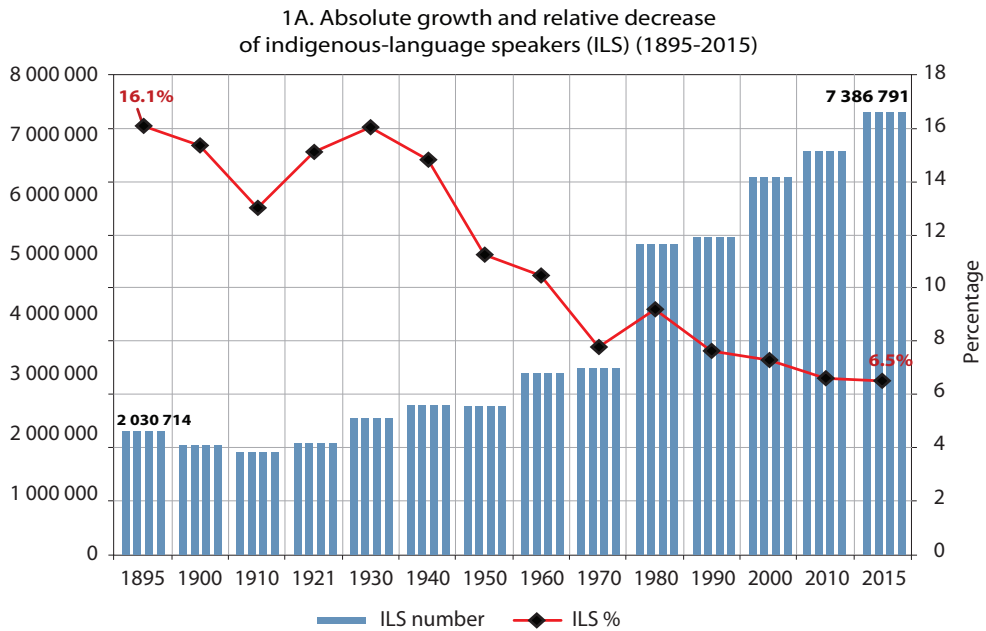
When seeking empirical approaches to these populations, the multi-dimensionality of the concept comes to the fore, in contrast to the Manichean character of the predominant social representations. From a historical perspective, the relevant criterion for classification is membership in some pre-Hispanic community. However, it is not easy to establish which groups in fact meet this requirement, since the processes of conquest, colonization and independence were accompanied by socio-demographic transformations that profoundly reshaped the country. Historians thus acknowledge the existence of several thousand “peoples” (formerly called “República de indios” or “Republics of Indians”) whose origin dates back to the Conquest or, in many cases, colonial times (Warman, 2003).

From a cultural perspective, usually the distinctive feature is speaking an indigenous language. Learning a language—and passing it on to your children from early childhood—is a strategic decision that involves years of structured interaction and only makes sense when that skill represents a need or an effective advantage. As Figure 1 illustrates, the number of Mexicans over the age of five who declare that they speak an indigenous language has increased considerably in the last 120 years, going from 2 030 714 in the 1895 Census to 7 386 791 people in the Inter-Census Survey of 2015. During the same period, its proportion decreased in relative terms, going from 16 per cent to less than 8 per cent from 1990, stabilizing around 6.5 per cent between 2010 and 2015. Even more noteworthy is the continuous reduction of the population that does not speak Spanish: it went from 1 794 306 to 910 053 people between 1895 and 2015 (that is, from 15.4 to 0.8 per cent of the total).

Upon the risk of underestimating the indigenous population, alternative estimates have been developed. Among these, the “Indigenous population in indigenous households” (“Población indígena en hogares indígenas”) stands out. An indigenous home is defined as “one where the head of the household, his or her spouse or one of the ancestors (mother or father, stepmother or stepfather, grandmother or grandfather, great-grandmother or great-grandfather, great-great-grandmother or great-great-grandfather, mother-in-law or father-in-law) declared to speak an indigenous language”. In 2015, a total of 11 938 749 people, namely 10 per cent of the Mexican population, were indigenous according to this definition (CDI, 2017).

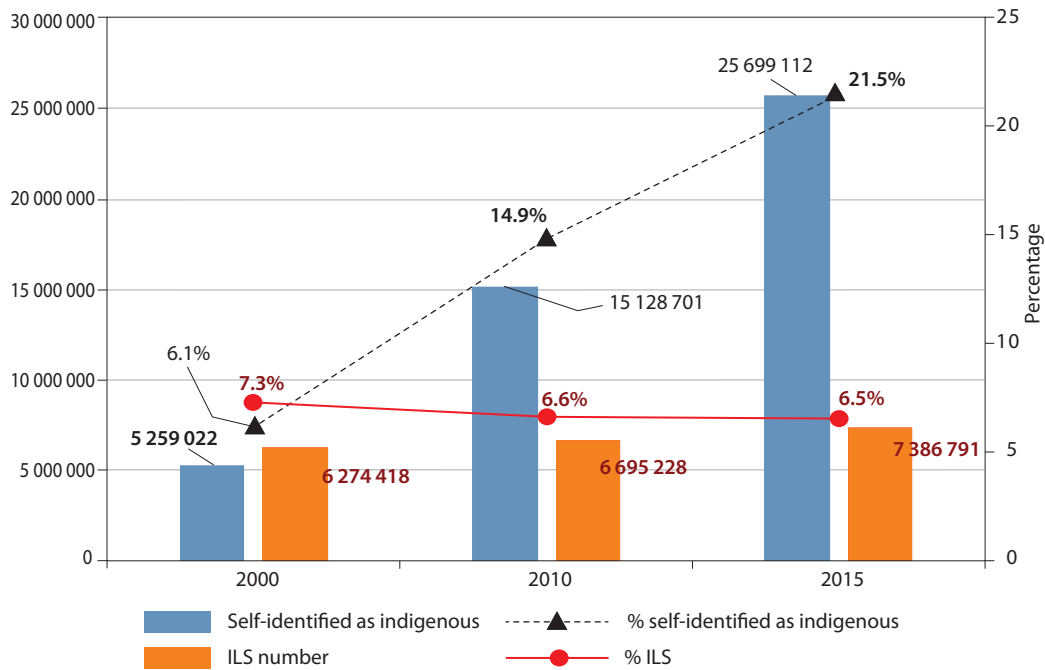
More recently, new survey questions have been experimented with to estimate the so-called “self-affiliation”. A first exercise was carried out with a sub-sample of the INEGI Census in 2000, which captured 5.3 million people who “considered themselves indigenous”. This was replicated in the 2010 Census and in the 2015 Inter-Census Survey, with a substantive modification of the phrasing that expanded its meaning by asking if “According to your culture, (name), do you consider yourself indigenous?” (INEGI, 2016). The underlying problems with these methodologies are reflected in the evolution of the resulting estimates that stand in acute contrast to the evolution of the percentage of speakers of indigenous languages. As

FIGURE 1. Quantitative evolution of the speakers of indigenous languages (1895-2015)



Source: Own elaboration based on general population censuses (INEGI, 1895, 1910, 1921, 1930, 1940, 1950, 1960, 1971, 1981, 2001 y 2011) and the Intercensal Survey 2015 (INEGI, 2015).

FIGURE 2. The growing gap between linguistic and self-description criteria (2000-2015)



Source: Own elaboration based on general population censuses (INEGI, 1895, 1910, 1921, 1930, 1940, 1950, 1960, 1971, 1981, 2001 y 2011) and the Intercensal Survey 2015 (INEGI, 2015).

can be seen in Figure 2, the proportion of people who self-describe as indigenous increased exponentially, going from 6.1 to 14.9 per cent and to 21.5 per cent between 2000, 2010 and 2015.

To these official estimates we must add the Barómetro de las Américas or Americas Barometer surveys. When asked “Do you consider yourself a white, mestizo, indigenous, black, mulatto, or some other?”, between 6.9 per cent (in 2012), 11 per cent (in 2014) and 9.5 per cent (in 2017) of the respondents answered that they considered themselves “indigenous people”. However, when asked “According to your culture, do you consider yourself indigenous?”, between 43.3 per cent (in 2014) and 47.2 per cent (in 2017) of the same respondents answered affirmatively (LAPOP, 2012-2017).

Rather than being a byproduct of demographic revolution, this growing gap is the result of different understandings and it reveals a gradual transformation regarding the social meaning of the concept “indigenous culture”, which is not reflected in a concomitant expansion of people who decide to transmit an indigenous language to their family members. In this paper, we favor the linguistic criterion, which underestimates the effective number of indigenous people but is more sta-

ble and less subjective, in addition to being quantifiable at the finest levels of electoral geography (which is not yet possible for self-affiliation).

Geography and a minimal sociology of indigenous “peoples” and “communities”

The 2010 Census registered 64 ethno-linguistic groups that were concentrated in 803 municipalities, 4 394 electoral sections and 28 338 localities with more than 30 per cent of indigenous language speakers (INEGI, 2011). Five years later, the 2015 Intercensal Survey added six more regional variants, which makes the great linguistic heterogeneity of Mexico worth noting. As Table 1 shows, only 16 groups have more than 100 000 inhabitants and only six have a population equivalent to or greater than the average size of a single-member district. In contrast, 36 groups have less than 10 000 inhabitants, 22 have less than 1 000, and five do not even reach 100 inhabitants. Thus, while the Nahuatl people are enough to constitute a small State, other indigenous populations barely reach the necessary magnitude to preserve community autonomy.

This prompts the question about the most suitable territorial level to study the political behavior of indigenous populations. The 28 000 localities include thousands of scattered hamlets where only a few isolated families reside, making them too small to be considered as culturally autonomous indigenous “peoples”. At the same time, the classic anthropological approach of studying entire municipalities to capture traditional fiefdom systems and community networks of mutual support, which made a lot of sense from the 1940s to the 1960s, has become insubstantial as a result of the population explosion. For example, the municipality of San Juan Chamula had 16 000 inhabitants in 1940 but now has 87 000 inhabitants distributed in more than one hundred localities which are organized in agencies that have conflicting relations with the municipal authority.

From an economic perspective, the importance of the forms of social property in the countryside is worth highlighting. In his reference work, Arturo Warman considers that, in the year 2000, around 854 000 indigenous “comuneros” (or co-proprietors) and “ejidatarios” resided and worked in 5 632 ejidos and agrarian communities (Warman, 2003).³ These productive units do not operate in a vacuum. As Aguirre Beltrán demonstrated, the economy of the communities is closely tied to the commercial centers wherein they sell their production and stock up on foreign goods. Therefore, these are part of broader socio-economic systems, in the image of the famous “refuge regions” (Aguirre Beltrán, 1967).

³In 2017, the system of the Registry and Record of Agrarian units (PHINA) still registers 31 699 agrarian units (29 728 ejidos and 1 971 communities), without specifying the ethno-linguistic relevance of the community members and ejidatarios. Available at: <https://datos.gob.mx/busca/dataset/estadistica-agraria--indicadores-basicos-de-la-propiedad-social/> [accessed on: April 9, 2019].

TABLE 1. Demographic heterogeneity of ethno-linguistic groups in Mexico

Indigenous language in Mexico (speakers 3 years and over to 2015)					
Indigenous language	Total	Indigenous language	Total	Indigenous language	Total
Nahuatl	1 725 620	Tepehuano del sur	36 543	Other American languages	1 126
Maya	859 607	Cora	28 718	Lacandon	998
Tzeltal	556 720	Chontal de Tabasco	27 666	Seri	754
Mixteco	517 665	Triqui	25 674	Pima	743
Tsotsil	487 898	Yaqui	20 340	K'iche'	730
Zapoteco	479 474	Huave	18 539	Chocholteco	729
Otomi	307 928	Popoloca	18 206	Jakalteco	527
Totonaco	267 635	Cuicateco	13 318	Kumiai	486
Chol (Ch'ol)	251 809	Pame	12 232	Texistepequeño	455
Mazateco	239 078	Mam	11 387	Cucapa	278
Huasteco	173 765	Tepehua	10 427	Paipai	216
Mazahua	147 088	Tepehuano del norte	9 568	Kiliwa	194
Tarasco	141 177	Q'anjob'al	8 421	Unspecified Tepehuano	170
Chinanteco	138 741	Unspecified Popoloca	6 122	Ixcateco	148
Tlapaneco	134 148	Chontal de Oaxaca	5 064	Qato'k	134
Mixe	133 632	Sayulteco	4 117	Kickapoo	124
<i>Unspecified indigenous language</i>	<i>101 187</i>	Chuj	2 890	Pápago	112
Tarahumara	73 856	Akateco	2 837	Ixil	103
Zoque	68 157	Chichimeco jonaz	2 134	Oluteco	90
Amuzgo	57 589	Guarijío	2 088	Teko	81
Tojolabal	55 442	Matlatzinca	1 568	Kaqchikel	61
Huichol	52 483	Tlahuica	1 548	Ayapaneco	24
Chatino	51 612	Q'eqchi'	1 324	Aguacateco (Awakateko)	17
Mayo	42 601	Unspecified Chontal	1 135		
Popoloca de la sierra	37 707				

Source: Own elaboration based on the Intercensal Survey 2015 (INEGI, 2015).

Accordingly, to consider different complementary levels of analysis is useful to identify communitarian policy instruments among the region, the municipality and the locality. Even though they do not perfectly correspond to the “community” level, the sections delimited by the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) offer advantages for the study of indigenous electoral behavior. These were designed to distribute the

population in a balanced manner, so they are relatively homogeneous in their demographic size. The 3 339 predominantly indigenous sections located in the rural area have between 532 (in 1991) and 1 200 registered voters (in 2018) on average. These sections, then, make it possible to capture the internal political diversity of the municipalities, the differences and the tensions between the peripheral agencies and the municipal authorities that usually manage public resources. INEGI added the data from the 2010 Census at this constitutive level of Mexican political geography, so we have many socio-demographic data that can be contrasted with electoral behavior on this scale (INEGI-IFE, 2012).

To begin with, I created a dichotomous variable that captures the 3 339 predominantly indigenous sections and provides a first approximation to the specificity of the electoral behaviors these microregions comprise, in contrast to the predominantly mestizo sections. As can be seen in Table 2, 65 per cent of all Mexican indigenous populations reside in them, representing on average 85 per cent of indigenous-district population.

When one works at this level, the temptation to commit ecological fallacies must be resisted. Generally, each section contains between two and five rural localities, so sectional averages do not allow inferences to be made for the level of individual voters. To locate these sections in their economic and sociocultural environment, we also distinguished seven large indigenous regions, which comprise 2 409 of the 3 339 predominantly indigenous sections and can be found on Figure 3.

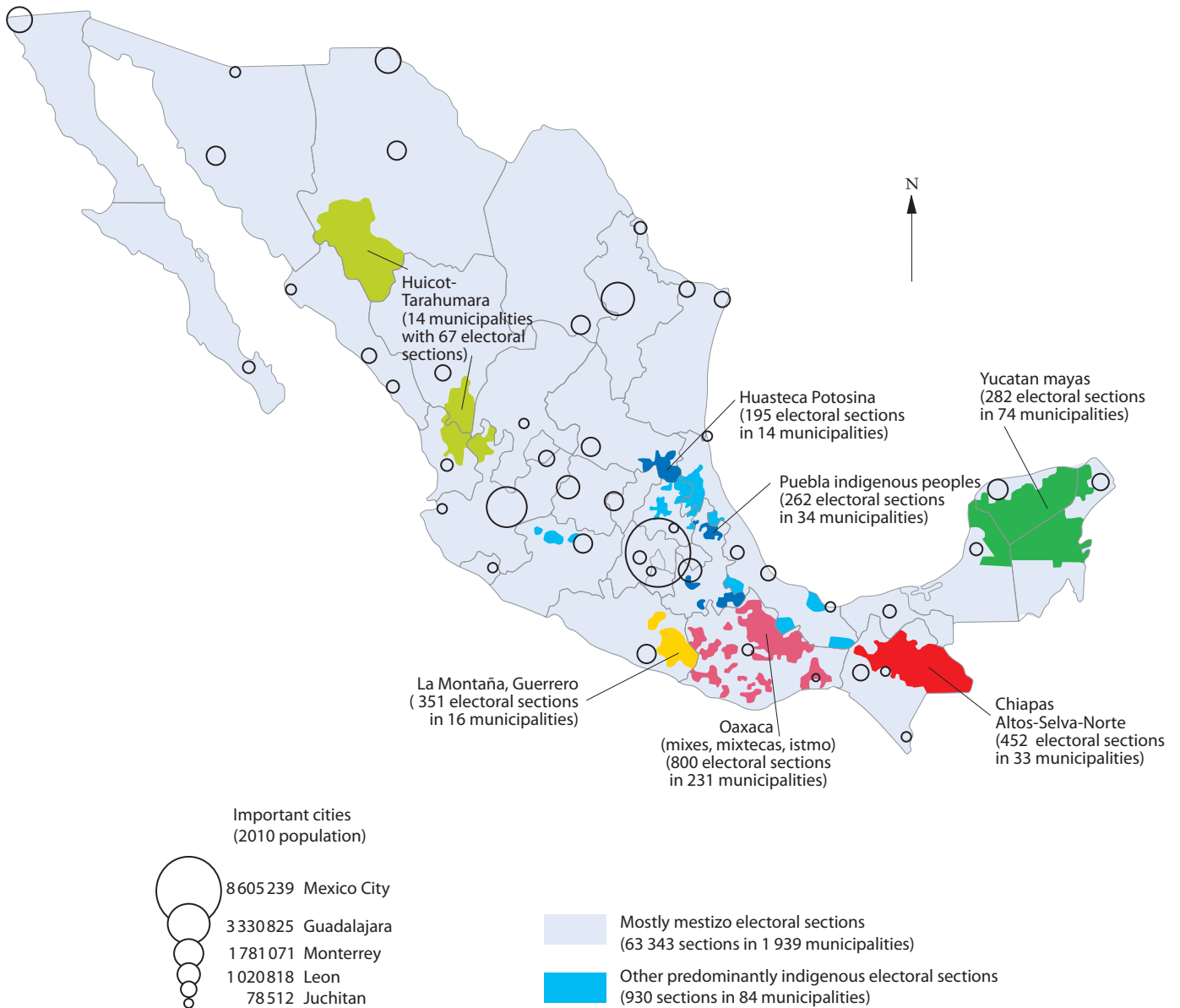
How, then, are ethnic-linguistic affiliations linked to recent dynamics of political representation in the Chamber of Deputies?

TABLE 2. Sectional distribution of the population by percentage speakers of indigenous languages (2010)

ILS (intervals) (%)	Number of sections	Population older than three years old (2010)	ILS older than three years old (2010)	ILS (%)	ILS Total (%)	Total ILS (accumulated) (%)
90-100	1 692	2 759 497	2 674 958	96.9	39.0	39.0
65-90	1 046	1 593 012	1 260 701	79.1	18.4	57.3
50-65	601	906 503	521 357	57.5	7.6	64.9
50-100	3 339	5 259 012	4 457 016	84.8	64.9	64.9
40-50	475	748 147	337 028	45.0	4.9	69.8
30-40	574	935 288	326 278	34.9	4.8	74.6
0-30	62 294	94 536 794	1 744 629	1.8	25.4	100.0
Total	66 682	101 479 241	6 864 951	6.8	100.0	

Source: Own elaboration based on INEGI-IFE (2012).

FIGURE 3. Geographical distribution of seven predominantly indigenous regions (2010)



Source: Own elaboration based on INEGI-IFE (2012).

A persistent lag in the field of legislative representation

Contrary to a recurring idea, the presence of indigenous deputies in the Congress of the Union is not new. As indicated by an investigation carried out during 2011 and 2012, they occupied at least four seats in the LIV Legislature of the Congress of the Union (1988-1991). However, historical trends do reveal a persistent lag in the area of indigenous legislative representation, despite an ephemeral increase in the LX and LXI Legislatures, elected in 2006 and 2009 (Sonnleitner, 2013).

In 2004, the IFE promoted a reform to create 28 federal single-member districts with more than 40 per cent of the indigenous population. This measure of positive discrimination sought to increase the number of indigenous legislators. In 2006, 18 indigenous deputies were elected (one by proportional representation and 17 by relative majority), maintaining a similar proportion in 2009 with the election of 17 deputies (eleven by relative majority and six by proportional representation). However, the effects of this initiative did not last. In 2012 and 2015, their number was significantly reduced to ten, with a continuous decrease in the number of indigenous deputies elected in single-member districts: this number went from seven to six between both Legislatures, and again to seven in 2018 (Figure 4).

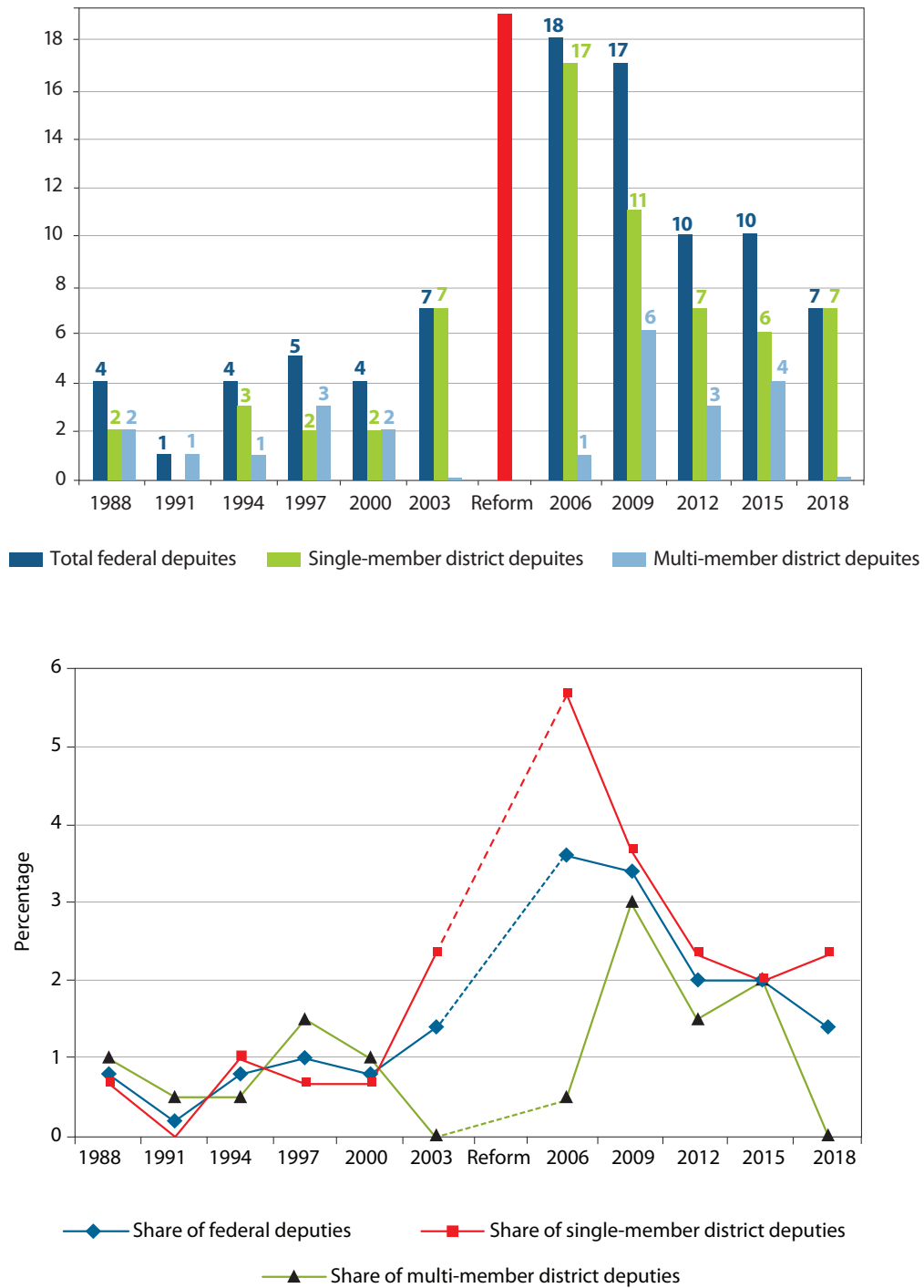
Counter-intuitively, since 2009 the number of elected legislators of indigenous origin has gone down. To clarify this seemingly paradoxical trend, let us analyze two complementary problems related to the design of the 28 “indigenous” single-member districts; and the operational definition of who can register as candidates in them.

The dispersion of indigenous populations in 28 single-member districts

Firstly, it is necessary to recognize the existence of a possible technical error in the design of the districts, which could be corrected by means of a more efficient *affirmative gerrymandering*. During the first reform of 2004/2005, a threshold that was too low (40%) was adopted and the highest estimates of the indigenous population of the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples (Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, CDI) were taken as a benchmark. For this reason, between 2006 and 2015 only fourteen “indigenous” districts had, as a matter of fact, effective majorities and, only in ten of them, two out of every three voters spoke any indigenous language (Table 3). Thus, by seeking to increase the number of districts, indigenous voters were dispersed, weakening the expected effects of *affirmative gerrymandering* rather than creating comparative advantages for indigenous candidates.

This problem was not solved during the last electoral re-distribution process that took place between 2016-2017. Instead of grouping indigenous communities into predominantly indigenous legislative districts (with thresholds of 50 or 65 per cent of indigenous language speakers, to generate more effective *affirmative gerrymandering*), the same number of districts (28) was maintained with the same threshold

FIGURE 4. Number and percentage of deputies of indigenous origin (1988-2018)



Source: Own elaboration based on Sonnleitner (2013) and INE (2018).

TABLE 3. Ethno-linguistic composition of the 28 indigenous districts (2006-2015 and 2018)

State	Federal district (2006-2015)	Population (2005)	Indigenous households (2005) (%)	ILS older than five years old (2005)	State	Federal district (2018)	Population (2015)	Indigenous households (CDI 2015) (%)	ILS older than five years old (2005)
Yucatan	01	313 935	89.5	69.7	Chiapas	3	360 651	91.6	85.1
Oaxaca	02	294 604	89.1	81.0	Yucatan	5	408 144	82.2	53.6
Yucatan	05	335 666	84.2	58.4	Yucatan	1	397 539	78.5	55.6
Guerrero	05	334 834	83.2	76.4	Chiapas	2	341 122	77.7	70.7
Puebla	04	348 885	80.2	66.2	Guerrero	5	375 497	74.8	64.8
Hidalgo	01	344 209	78.0	65.4	Chiapas	1	309 727	73.3	65.8
Oaxaca	04	321 044	76.6	66.1	San Luis Potosi	7	394 708	73.2	57.2
Chiapas	02	287 687	74.8	74.0	Hidalgo	1	411 307	72.6	58.6
San Luis Potosi	07	372 306	74.3	61.0	Veracruz	2	376 917	69.5	55.1
Veracruz	02	365 776	72.9	59.1	Oaxaca	2	390 979	62.8	53.6
Chiapas	05	314 128	72.2	66.6	Chiapas	5	380 630	60.8	51.4
Chiapas	01	365 666	71.8	71.1	Oaxaca	4	420 649	59.0	47.5
Chiapas	03	301 133	66.8	73.5	Oaxaca	6	386 817	58.6	47.3
Oaxaca	07	329 088	63.8	47.2	Chiapas	11	294 819	58.4	52.1
Oaxaca	06	324 848	62.5	52.0	Veracruz	18	426 531	53.2	44.2
Yucatan	02	303 554	61.4	35.0	Guerrero	6	411 791	52.0	45.6
Puebla	16	284 521	57.6	48.5	Oaxaca	7	390 874	51.5	36.2
Veracruz	06	325 892	52.2	35.6	Puebla	2	403 513	49.3	40.3
Veracruz	18	338 583	52.1	44.0	Puebla	4	405 506	46.4	36.4
Mexico	09	419 341	49.6	24.7	Yucatan	2	399 129	45.6	23.1
Quintana Roo	02	299 581	47.2	31.5	Oaxaca	9	393 164	44.7	34.7
Hidalgo	02	325 737	45.8	26.7	Veracruz	6	401 040	44.1	30.4
Oaxaca	11	335 878	43.2	34.2	Quintana Roo	2	343 324	44.0	27.6
Oaxaca	10	303 801	42.4	33.3	Oaxaca	5	379 870	42.5	30.5
Puebla	01	354 471	41.5	28.9	Puebla	3	410 363	42.4	27.0
Oaxaca	05	282 929	41.5	27.1	Oaxaca	1	392 417	41.8	28.6
Campeche	01	328 299	40.5	24.0	Hidalgo	2	397 706	40.1	24.0
Oaxaca	01	307 864	40.4	27.8	Puebla	1	402 163	40.0	26.0

Source: Author's elaboration with data from CDI (2006 and 2017) and INEGI (2006 and 2015).

(40%) and the same criteria (*population in indigenous households*). Therefore, only twelve constituencies were created with more than 50 per cent of indigenous language speakers, of which only four have 65 per cent or more of indigenous language speakers, once again diluting the effective proportion of indigenous populations and the potential comparative advantages for their candidates in sixteen multi-ethnic districts (Table 3).

The disputed indigenous identity: to be, or not to be an “indigenous candidate”

Secondly, a more complex variable must be considered, related to the ambivalence of the criteria for registering as an indigenous candidate. Who competed, and who was elected in the indigenous districts?

The tensions surrounding the nomination of candidates in the thirteen districts with the highest percentage of indigenous population, revealed the difficulties in defining which of them could be considered “indigenous”. From a legalistic standpoint, the INE adopted flexible criteria, privileged self-affiliation and allowed multiple forms of accrediting community ties, for example with proof of having worked for the benefit of some community. This raised questions about a significant number of candidacies. For instance, the challenges that arose in the Chiapas districts 02 of Bochil and 11 of Las Margaritas, where two high-ranking officials of the government of Manuel Velasco Coello (locally known as “el güero Velasco”) ran for office, are illustrative. Despite the fact that public opinion unanimously perceived them as mestizos, they were elected and confirmed by controversial sentences, based on their “qualified self-affiliation” (TEPJF, 2018).

Beyond the controversial criteria adopted by the electoral authorities, the situational complexity and the inter-subjective, contextual and relational nature of indigenous identities in Mexico became clear. For our research, we managed to collect data on the trajectories of 85 of the 105 candidates that were registered in the 28 districts with more than 40 per cent of indigenous population. In addition to self-affiliation and community collaboration, we considered other complementary criteria (including the use of traditional clothing, speaking an indigenous language, having held office in the community and/or indigenous representative positions) to assess whether these candidacies were presented (and were publicly recognized) as indigenous. In contrast to their gender composition (45% of women and 55% of men), only twenty of these (23.5%) were publicly recognized as indigenous (10 women and 10 men) while 65 were considered as being of mestizo origin. In the thirteen districts where political parties had a formal obligation to present indigenous candidates, 44 candidacies were registered (48% women and 52% men), of which ten had indigenous identity (22.7%) and 26 had mestizo identity (no information was obtained for the remaining eight).

BOX 1. Elected federal deputies of indigenous origin (2018)

						
<p>Clementina Marta Dekker Gómez San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, 5th congressional district. Nominated by Juntos Haremos Historia. Her mother is tzetzal and her father is dutch (Immigrated to Mexico after Second World War). During her due she lived in The Netherlands and studied in Europe, before coming back to Mexico. Entrepreneur and sportswoman, her political life began as a Partido del Trabajo (PT) affiliate in 2001. She was a candidate for PT to the local congress.</p>	<p>Irma Juan Carlos Teotitlan de Flores Magon, Oaxaca, 2nd congressional district. From chinanteco origin, nominated by Juntos Haremos Historia. Originally from Cuenca de Papaloapan. She holds a Bachelor degree in Biology and a Masters in Agronomy (Costa Rica). Her political career started within student movements. Proudly asserts her belonging to chinanteca ethnicity and she is close to Salomón Jara (Board Member of Morena in Oaxaca).</p>	<p>Marcelino Rivera Hernández Tamazunchale, San Luis Potosí, 7th congressional district. PAN local leader from huasteco origin, nominated by the coalition Por México al Frente. Originally from San Martín Chalchicuautla, he immigrated to the United States to finance his father's career as PAN Mayor (1992-1994). Local congressman from 2003-2006 (LVII Legislature) And congressman for Tamazunchale from 2006 to 2009 (LX Legislature). He was also Mayor of San Martín Chalchicuautla and state PAN Secretary with a strong projection within his district.</p>	<p>Juan José Canul Pérez Ticul, Yucatan, 5th congressional district. Politician from maya origin with a long-lived political career within PRI. After his role as police director of Uman (1998-2001), he was council member and later interim Mayor of the same municipality. He would later become director for the Secretary of Rural Development in Yucatan.</p>	<p>Cipriano Charrez Pedraza Ixquimilpan, Hidalgo, 2nd congressional district. No leader an affiliate of PAN from otomi origin, accepted Morena nomination after he lost the nomination within his party in coalition with PRD. Founder of the Indigenous Otomi Movement (MIO in Spanish), Mayor of Ixquimilpan (2012-2016) and local congressman for the 5th district (2016-2018), He raced against his brother Pascual Charrez Pedraza who at the time was an Ixquimilpan council member on leave.</p>	<p>Beatriz Dominga Pérez López Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca, 6th congressional district. Leader from triqui origin nominated by Juntos Haremos Historia. The daughter of Juan Domingo Pérez Castillo, known triqui region chieftain. Multiple murders within his community have been pointed out.</p>	<p>Bonifacio Aguilar Linda Zongolica, Veracruz 18th congressional district. Known PRD leader from nahuatl origin. He was mayor of Soledad Atzompa municipality after he joined morena and won the race against all odds and predictions made by former fellow party members.</p>

Source: Own elaboration with data from the project “Observando los desafíos de la inclusión democrática en México” (Democracia, Derechos Humanos y Seguridad, El Colegio de México, Electoral Observation Fund 2017-2018, United Nations Development Programme).

In July 2018, four male, and three female indigenous federal deputies were elected. Five of them competed successfully in one of the twelve predominantly indigenous districts (42%), while the remaining two did so in one of the other sixteen districts with more than 40 per cent indigenous population (13%). Thus, a clear lag persists in terms of indigenous representation, which extends here to gender parity as well, particularly in the thirteen districts with more than 60 per cent of the population in indigenous households, where only four women were elected deputies (31%) against nine elected male legislators (69.2%). Box 1 summarizes the

biographical information of these legislators and allows locating the districts where they were elected.

These results contrast with the progress made in gender equality. Instead of increasing with the new affirmative action measures, the number of legislators of indigenous origin was reduced, returning to the levels of 2003, before the 28 indigenous districts were created. To understand the persistence of these gaps, the question about the existence of an electoral behavior that is specifically indigenous is in order.

WAS THERE AN “INDIGENOUS” VOTE FROM 1991 TO 2018?

Let us now investigate the results of the presidential and federal deputy elections held from 1991 to 2018. Before controlling for the possible effects of other socio-demographic variables and becoming interested in the vote of seven major ethno-linguistic regions, I compare the mestizo electoral sections with the indigenous sections. How does one vote in indigenous territories? Does ethno-linguistic belonging turn into a specific and common electoral pattern?

How does the indigenous mexican vote?

To begin with, let’s avoid committing culturalist fallacies. The first of these is to assume that elections are external and of no interest to indigenous peoples. As can be seen in Table 4, this premise has no empirical support. Indeed, until 2006, the 3 339 sections with more than 50 per cent of indigenous language speakers were characterized by lower rates of electoral participation. However, since then the trends have been reversed and, today, they register higher averages than those observed in the mestizo sections.

Another common fallacy assumes that indigenous policy is unanimous and consensual, which is why communities oppose multi-party elections. Without a doubt, in many indigenous communities there is a rejection of traditional parties and a commitment to so-called “uses and customs”. However, this movement focuses on the renewal of municipal elites. In the elections for president and federal deputies,

TABLE 4. Electoral participation in the predominantly indigenous sections

Presidential elections	1994	2000	2006	2012	2018
Mixed-race sections	77.2	63.0	57.7	63.4	63.5
Largely indigenous sections	64.8	57.3	55.3	68.6	69.9
<i>Difference</i>	-12.4	-5.6	-2.5	5.2	6.4

Source: Own elaboration based on INEGI-IFE (2012), IFE (2012) and INE (2018).

the Effective Number of Electoral Parties (Nepel) does not present substantive differences with the mestizo and the predominantly indigenous sections: after having reached 1.6 in 1991 (single-party context), this index reached the threshold of bipartisanship since 1994 (2.6) and tri-partisanship since 2009. Thus, now it stands at an average of 3.4 (that is, in a format of more than three relevant parties, just like what is observed on average in the mestizo sections).

Let us now look at the composition of the vote in the different multi-ethnic contexts (mixed, majority and almost exclusively indigenous). For this, we analyze the results in the 4352 electoral sections with more than 30 per cent of indigenous language speakers. To contrast them with the rest of mestizo sections, we distinguish five sub-categories with increasing percentages of indigenous populations: the 568 sections with 30-40 per cent and the 473 sections with 40-50 per cent (where mestizos have strong territorial presence), the 596 sections with 50-65 per cent and the 1039 sections with between 65-90 per cent (where mestizos are visible minorities) and the 1676 sections with more than 90 per cent of indigenous language speakers (where mestizos are a small minority).

In 2018, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) and Ricardo Anaya in the presidential race as well as their respective party platforms, Movimiento Regeneración Nacional (Morena) and the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) in the legislative race all underperformed in the different types of indigenous sections, while the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) and the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) held up better there than in the mestizo sections. This different result is also reflected in the percentages of sections that the different candidates/parties managed to win: AMLO wins first place in 79.6 per cent of the mestizo sections but only achieves this in 61.8 per cent of the eminently indigenous sections; Meade (the PRI candidate), on the other hand, only wins in 5.2 per cent of the mestizo sections but reaches first place in 21 per cent of the indigenous sections. As for Jaime Rodríguez Calderón, also known as “El Bronco”, his votes are clearly concentrated in the mestizo sections. The other parties (particularly PT and PVEM) capture a slightly higher number of votes in multi-ethnic contexts, receiving 23.9 per cent in the sections with more than 90 per cent of indigenous language speakers. These figures confirm what we already mentioned above: despite being characterized by a greater presence of the PRI and the PRD, today the indigenous sections have a partisan diversity that is very similar to that of the mestizo regions (Table 5).

However, it would be premature to conclude that the indigenous electorate is more participatory, and more inclined toward the PRI and/or the PRD than its mestizo counterpart. As we will see below, these differences may well be driven by socio-demographic characteristics.

Neither does the “indigenous” category capture the heterogeneity of situations in which the different indigenous communities of the country live in. For example,

TABLE 5. The (de-)composition of the vote in the indigenous sections (2018)

Num. Sections by intervals of ILS (%)	Num. Sections	ILS (%)	Turnout	AMLO (Pres.)	Won by AMLO (%)	Morena (Dip.)	Anaya (Pres.)	Won by Anaya (%)	PAN (Dip.)	PRD (Dip.)	Meade (Pres.)	Won by Meade (%)	PRI (Dip.)	Bronco (Pres.)	Others (Dip.)	NEPEL (Dip.)
90-100	1676	96.9	69.8	48.2	61.8	31.4	21.1	15.9	11.1	10.1	30.0	21.0	23.5	0.6	23.9	3.3
65-90	1039	78.9	69.4	50.7	67.7	33.4	21.9	15.0	14.9	8.5	26.5	16.7	23.3	0.9	20.0	3.4
50-65	596	57.5	70.9	52.0	71.1	33.0	21.5	14.1	15.6	7.5	25.3	14.0	23.7	1.2	20.3	3.6
40-50	473	45.0	71.1	53.7	73.1	34.9	19.3	10.5	14.7	7.2	25.6	16.2	24.4	1.4	18.8	3.4
30-40	568	34.9	70.5	53.1	75.8	35.0	19.5	9.4	15.1	6.2	25.7	13.8	24.2	1.7	19.5	3.5
0-30	62327	1.7	63.4	52.8	79.6	36.7	23.7	13.9	19.4	5.7	18.2	5.2	18.6	5.2	19.6	3.6
Total	66679	6.4	63.8	52.7	78.8	36.5	23.5	13.9	19.0	5.9	18.8	6.0	18.9	4.9	19.7	3.6

Source: Own elaboration based on INEGI-IFE (2012), IFE (2012) and INE (2018). *Note:* These percentages slightly differ from the official returns because they do not include votes cast in special voting booths and abroad.

let's analyze the vote in seven regions built upon the predominantly indigenous sections. Rather than a consistent behavior, it is more convenient to speak of a marked diversity of votes that are related to the socio-territorial dynamics of these eminently indigenous regions. Voter turnout fluctuates greatly among them, reaching as little as 56.6 per cent in the Huicot-Tarahumara region, or as much as 84 per cent among the Maya of the Yucatan peninsula. Meade's success is impressive in both regions (where he wins 53.7% and 42.9% of the sections) and contrasts with his mediocre results in Guerrero, Oaxaca and the rest of mestizo and indigenous sections (Table 6).

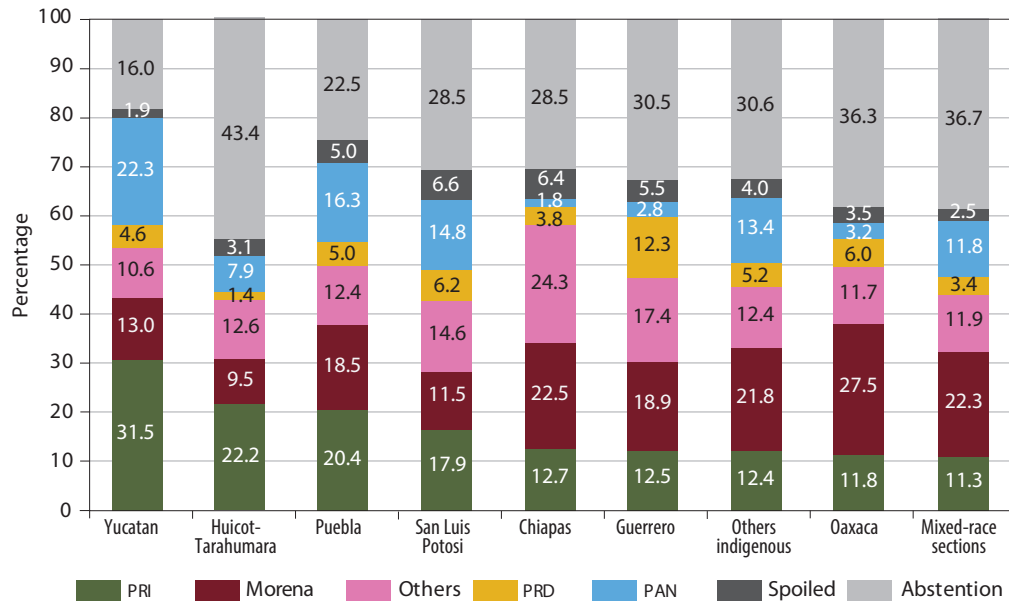
In turn, Anaya's results vary strongly among the indigenous regions of Chiapas and Oaxaca (where the PAN is mostly absent), and those that are located in San Luis, Puebla and Yucatan (where he obtains between 28.2 and 31.3 per cent of the valid vote). The PRD barely receives 2.6 per cent of the vote in the Huicot-Tarahumara region but captures 9.9 per cent in Oaxaca, 9.5 per cent in San Luis and 19.2 per cent in the indigenous Montaña de Guerrero. In the end, Morena is not the exception: López Obrador's results fluctuate between 29.5 per cent in Yucatan and 64.2 per cent in Oaxaca, differences that are due to the success/failure of his state campaigns and not to ethno-linguistic variables.

It is striking to observe that in some indigenous regions the vote is more fragmented than in the mestizo zone, a result captured by the high number of votes going to

TABLE 6. Voting in seven indigenous regions (elections for deputies, 2018)

Regions with more than 50 percent of ILS	Num. Sections	Turnout	AMLO (Pres.)	Won by AMLO (%)	Morena (Dip.)	Anaya (Pres.)	Won by Anaya (%)	PAN (Dip.)	PRD (Dip.)	Meade (Pres.)	Won by Meade (%)	PRI (Dip.)	Others (Pres.)	Others (Dip.)	NEPEL (Dip.)
Huicot-Tarahumara	63	56.6	31.7	25.4	17.8	19.8	14.9	14.7	2.6	48.1	53.7	41.4	0.4	23.5	3.3
Peninsula de Yucatan	272	84.0	29.5	29.4	15.9	31.3	25.9	27.2	5.6	38.5	42.9	38.4	0.7	12.9	3.3
Chiapas	443	71.5	50.1	61.3	34.6	9.9	4.4	2.7	5.8	38.8	32.3	19.6	1.1	37.3	3.3
Puebla	262	77.5	42.0	56.9	25.5	28.8	21.8	22.4	6.8	28.4	21.8	28.1	0.9	17.1	3.7
San Luis Potosi	195	71.5	40.8	64.1	17.7	28.2	21.0	22.8	9.6	29.5	14.9	27.5	1.5	22.4	4.5
Guerrero	346	69.5	53.0	68.7	29.6	23.3	17.9	4.4	19.2	23.3	12.5	19.6	0.5	27.2	3.4
Oaxaca	794	63.7	64.2	87.0	45.7	13.0	2.9	5.3	9.9	22.0	9.6	19.6	0.8	19.5	3.1
Mixed-race sections	64544	63.3	52.9	79.6	36.8	23.6	13.8	19.4	5.6	18.1	5.3	18.6	5.3	19.7	3.6
Other indigenous regions	615	69.4	48.5	65.5	33.4	28.4	29.0	20.6	8.0	22.0	5.2	19.0	1.0	19.0	3.6

Source: Own elaboration based on INEGI-IFE (2012) and INE (2018).

FIGURE 5. The composition of the vote in seven indigenous regions (legislative elections, 2018)

Source: Own elaboration based on INEGI-IFE (2012) and INE (2018).

other parties. This electoral diversity of the indigenous universe is represented in Figure 5, which synthesizes the political plurality of these seven indigenous regions.

Schooling, language and electoral behavior (1991-2018)

Secondly, let's analyze the electoral results of the elections for federal deputies from 1991 to 2018, distinguishing between the trends of the mestizo and indigenous electoral sections and controlling for the average level of schooling, in order to establish if there were specific electoral patterns in the indigenous territories.

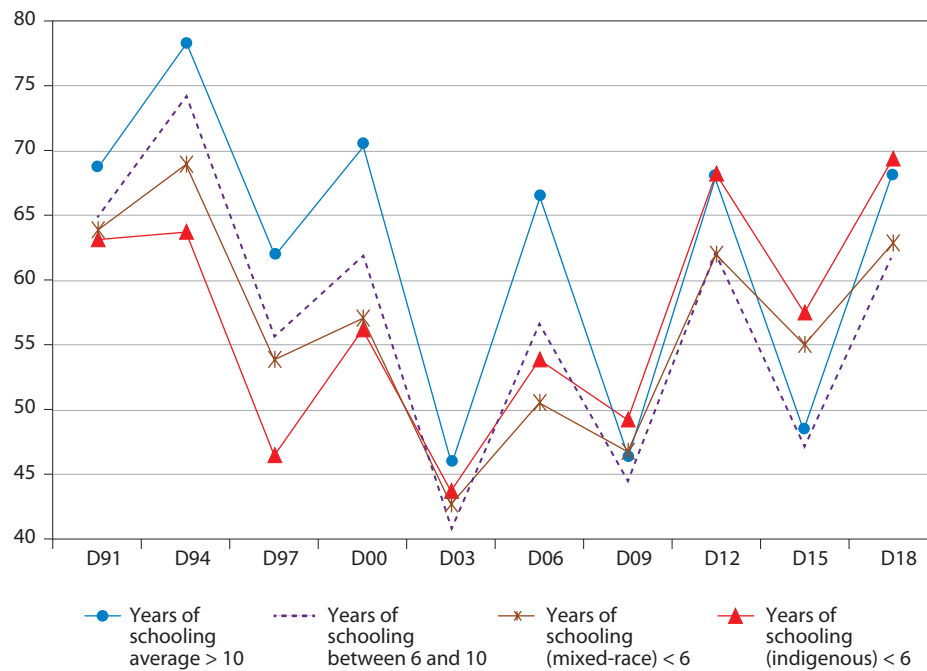
As is well known, in many countries electoral participation increases at a higher level of schooling. In Mexico, this relationship is confirmed although it is weaker than in consolidated democracies (at the section level, the Pearson correlation between the school average and the average of electoral participation from 1991 to 2018 is +0.354). However, there is also a clear negative correlation between schooling and the sectional percentages of speakers of indigenous languages (-0.341). Therefore, to establish whether there is an indigenous vote it is essential to analyze the levels of electoral participation in light of the strong territorial inequalities of schooling.

To do this, we grouped the electoral sections into four categories that synthesize the averages of: the 2 697 predominantly indigenous sections with an average schooling of less than six years (where 87 per cent of the population speaks an indigenous language); the 11 511 mestizo sections with an equivalent level of schooling (in which only 3.8 per cent of the population speaks an indigenous language); the 36 727 sections with six to ten years of schooling (in which 3.6 per cent speak an indigenous language);⁴ as well as the 15 730 mestizo sections with more than ten years of schooling (in which only 1 per cent speaks an indigenous language).

As Figure 6 illustrates, electoral participation in Mexico is highly volatile: it reached 78.3 per cent in the sections with the highest schooling in 1994 and bottomed out with 40.3 per cent in the sections with intermediate schooling in the 2003 elections. It always increases when the legislative elections overlap with the presidential elections (in 1994, 2000, 2006, 2012 and 2018) and is notably weaker in the mid-term elections. Until 2006, participation was higher in the sections with more schooling, especially in the presidential elections. However, from 2006 onward it increased significantly in the sections with low education, regardless of whether they were mestizo or indigenous. Finally, since 2009, electoral participation has been equal, or even higher, in the eminently indigenous sections than in the sections with the highest schooling averages.

⁴ 36 085 of these sections have fewer, and 642 have more, than 50 per cent of indigenous language speakers.

FIGURE 6. The electoral participation in the mestizo and indigenous sections (by schooling)

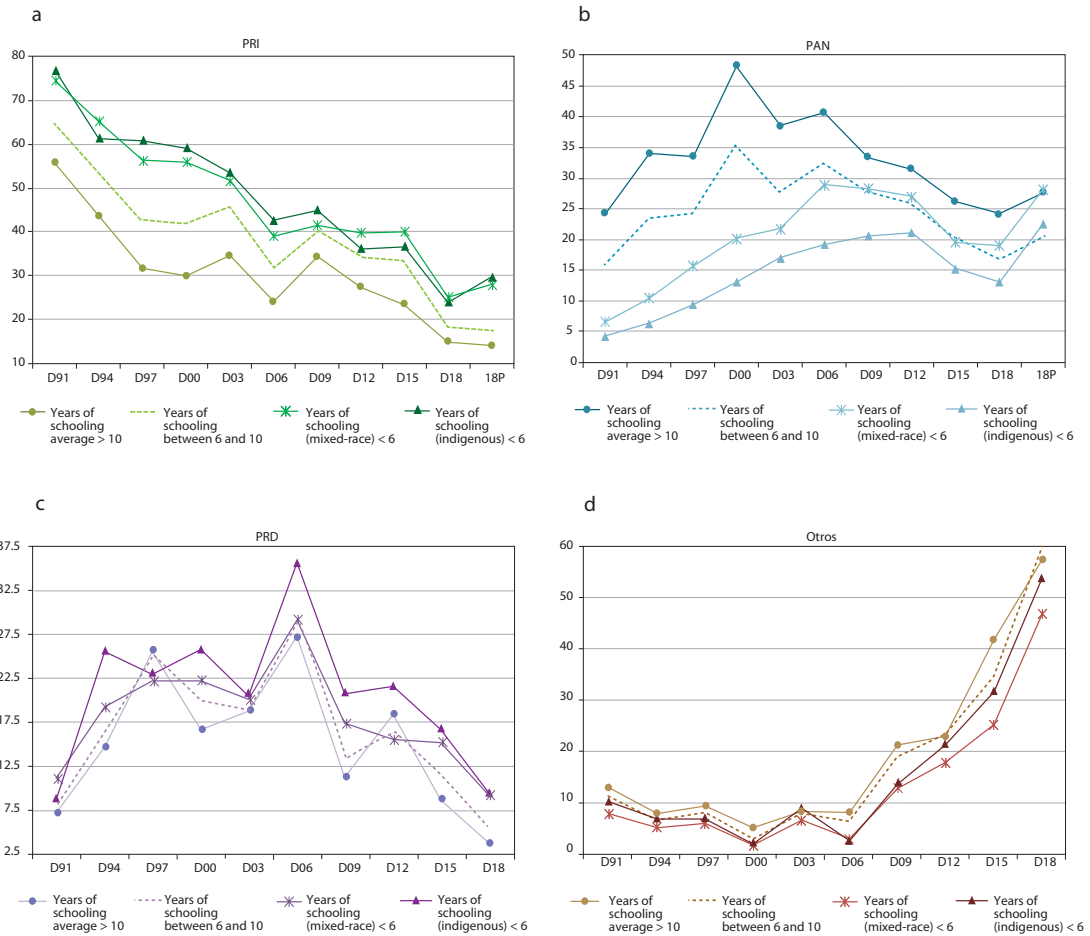


Source: Own elaboration based on INEGI-IFE (2012), IFE (2012) and INE (2018).

To complete this analysis, I look at the evolution of party preferences in these same four categories. Since 1991 and throughout the entire period, the mainly indigenous sections (marked with triangles) have been characterized by a much stronger presence of the PRI (Figure 7a) and a much weaker presence of the PAN (Figure 7b). The differences are particularly noticeable during the period 1997-2006 and reach impressive levels for the legislative elections of the year 2000, in which the PRI obtained up to 29 percentage points more (and the PAN up to 35 percentage points less) in these predominantly indigenous sections compared to the mestizo sections with more than ten years of schooling.

The differences will later remain but considerably reduced. In the case of the PRI, this is due to its across-the-board weakening which is observed in all categories but is more noticeable in the sections with lower levels of schooling. In the case of PAN, on the other hand, the convergence is due to its profound drop in the sections with more education and its relative growth in the sections with less education, as a consequence of the diversification of its electorate. A low degree of vote differentiation is observed as well in the case of the PRD, which, with the exception of 1997 (the election of Cárdenas in the Federal District), is more successful in the indigenous sections (Figure 7c).

FIGURE 7. The partisan vote in the mestizo and indigenous sections (by schooling)



Source: Own elaboration based on INEGI-IFE (2012), IFE (2012) and INE (2018).

Likewise, the similarity of the trends observed in the mestizo and indigenous sections with low levels of schooling (indicated by asterisks and triangles) is worth noting. This provides a first approximation to the effects of schooling on electoral behavior. These effects are particularly apparent in the case of PRI, which has very similar roots in all the sections with less than six years of schooling, regardless of whether they are mestizo or indigenous. Rather than corresponding to an ethnic or cultural behavior, this difference seems to be related to other factors of economic and socio-demographic nature. Finally, the little vote differentiation of the other parties is striking, whose presence is usually slightly higher in the sections with the highest level of education (with the exception of 2003), but whose growth since 2009 is overwhelming and impressive in the four analytical categories.

This first exploratory exercise indicates that the ethno-linguistic variable does seem to have effects on electoral behavior, although it also calls for further analysis, integrating and controlling for other socio-demographic variables.

Ethnicity or exclusion? The weight of socio-demographic and regional variables

To capture the specific weight of ethnicity without confounding it with the effects of other socio-demographic and territorial factors that may also influence electoral behavior, I ran a series of multi-variable regression models, with the data from the latest 2010 Census added at the level of the 66682 electoral sections (INEGI-IFE, 2012).

The independent variable of interest is the sectional percentage of speakers of indigenous languages (“pHLI”). Likewise, we used seven binary variables (“Indigenous_”, coded with 1/0) to identify the predominantly indigenous sections of each of the seven regions that we previously distinguished, in order to explore the specificity of indigenous electoral patterns among the Yucatecan Mayans, in the Potosina and Puebla Huasteca, in Chiapas, Oaxaca and Guerrero, as well as in the Huicot-Tarahumara region.

Regarding the socio-demographic control variables, I consider, together with the average years of schooling (“MediaEsc”), the sectional percentages of young people between 15 and 24 years of age (“Joven15a24”), the population residing in another entity in the last five years (“Immigrants”), those who worship the Catholic religion (“Catholic”), those who have access to the ISSSTE (Instituto de Seguridad y Servicios Sociales de los Trabajadores del Estado) or the IMSS (Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social), as well as the proportion of marginalized homes that have neither electricity, piped water nor drained water (“Sin_ServBas”).

To facilitate the interpretation and the direct comparison of all coefficients with the seven regional dichotomous variables, I standardized each continuous independent variable by subtracting its average and dividing it by two standard deviations (“rs”). This procedure, suggested by Andrew Gelman and Jennifer Hill (2007: 56), not only enables centering these variables (which allows the intersection to correspond with the predicted average result when the set of variables are located at their respective mean); by dividing each variable by two standard deviations (instead of one), an increase of an integer unit in that variable then corresponds to a change from one standard deviation below to one standard deviation above its respective average (which is approximately equivalent to the change of a binary variable between the values 0 and 1).⁵

⁵ Indeed, if it is assumed that a binary variable can take on the values 0 or 1 with a probability of 0.5, this means that the standard deviation of this variable corresponds to the square root of 0.5×0.5 , which is equal to 0.5. Therefore, the binary variable standardized in this way corresponds to ± 0.5 , and its coefficient is equivalent to a change between 0 and 1. On the other hand, if it is only divided by one standard deviation, the rescaled variable can take values of ± 1 , so the coefficient only corresponds to half the change between 0 and 1 (Gelman & Hill, 2007: 57).

TABLE 7. Correlations between independent socio-demographic variables

	rsILS	rsSchooling	rsSq_Immigrants	rsYouth15-24	rsCatholics	rsSqISTE	rsIMSS	rsLn_NoBasicServices
rsILS	1	-.341**	.008*	.111**	-.082**	-.220**	-.260**	.417**
rsSchooling	-.341**	1	.035**	.233**	-.201**	.700**	.631**	-.709**
rsSq_Immigrants	.008*	.035**	1	-.016**	-.219**	-.118**	-.015**	.166**
rsYouth15-24	.111**	.233**	-.016**	1	-.065**	.222**	.024**	-.063**
rsCatholics	-.082**	-.201**	-.219**	-.065**	1	-.095**	-.170**	.037**
rsSqISTE	-.220**	.700**	-.118**	.222**	-.095**	1	.317**	-.528**
rsIMSS	-.260**	.631**	-.015**	.024**	-.170**	.317**	1	-.689**
rsLn_NoBasicServices	.417**	-.709**	.166**	-.063**	.037**	-.528**	-.689**	1

Source: Own elaboration based on INEGI-IFE (2012). *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) N=6682.

Before standardization, I applied some simple transformations to the variables with biased distributions, so that they could have reasonably normal distributions (this is why we used the square roots “Sq_” of the rates of immigrants, Catholics and beneficiaries of the ISSSTE, as well as the natural logarithm “Ln_” of homes with deficiencies in basic services). Since all the variables are similarly standardized, the differences between the various coefficient scales (which can be directly contrasted with the binary variables) are eliminated.

In this way, the constant represents the predicted average of the independent variable of each model (percentage of electoral participation, vote for PRI, PAN, PRD or other parties), and the coefficients of the standardized regressors (in this case, the control variables) can be interpreted on a scale equivalent to that of the coefficients of the binary variables of interest (in our case, the predominantly indigenous sections in the seven analyzed indigenous regions). As can be seen in Table 7, there are relevant correlations between the different variables. However, these are not strong enough to pose collinearity problems (the statistics of the reported models never go over 3.8 for FIV values, with a tolerance of less than 0.262 for the schooling average).

Let us now turn to data analysis. Considering that the dependent variables vary in a range between 0-100 and that, in practical terms, their distribution is normal, we use linear regression models. These allow the constants to be interpreted as the predicted averages of the dependent variables when all the continuous indepen-

dent variables are at their mean level and the binary variable has the value of 0. In turn, the standardized coefficients correspond to the total effect that either an increase of two standard variations of a continuous variable or an increase of a unit of a dichotomous categorical variable, in percentage points of the dependent variable, would have.

As observed in the three models in Table 8, the general average of electoral participation between 1991 and 2018 was 58 per cent in the mestizo sections (as indicated by the constant at the intersection), while PRI obtained 40 per cent of the valid vote during the same period, against 26 per cent for PAN and 16 per cent for PRD. As the first model shows, the predominantly indigenous sections are not characterized by a statistically significant difference in terms of electoral participation, but in these sections PRI does seem to achieve +4.7 percentage points more, in con-

TABLE 8. Regression models to explain the averages of the 1991-2018 period

Dependent variables (% averages 1991-2018)					
Models	Turnout	PRI	PAN	PRD	Others
1 (Constant)	58.5 (0.000)	40.3 (0.000)	25.8 (0.000)	16.5 (0.000)	17.4 (0.000)
<i>rsLS</i>	.1 NS (0.364)	4.7 (0.000)	-5.8 (0.000)	1.9 (0.000)	-.8 (0.000)
Adjusted R2	-0.000	.038	.051	.007	.005
2 (Constant)	58.3 (0.000)	40.4 (0.000)	26.1 (0.000)	16.2 (0.000)	17.3 (0.000)
<i>rsLS</i>	2.1 (0.000)	-2 NS (0.039)	.4 (0.000)	-.3 (0.008)	0.1 NS (0.053)
<i>rsSchooling</i>	10.0 (0.000)	-12.1 (0.000)	12.2 (0.000)	-2.3 (0.000)	2.1 (0.000)
<i>rsSq_Immigrants</i>	-3.7 (0.000)	-.6 (0.000)	1.8 (0.000)	-1.0 (0.000)	-.3 (0.000)
<i>rsYouth15-24</i>	-1.4 (0.000)	.2 NS (0.027)	-1.6 (0.000)	.7 (0.000)	.7 (0.000)
<i>rsCatholics</i>	3.1 (0.000)	-.9 (0.000)	4.5 (0.000)	-2.0 (0.000)	-1.6 (0.000)
<i>rsSqISTE</i>	-1.9 (0.000)	-.9 (0.000)	-8.8 (0.000)	7.5 (0.000)	2.3 (0.000)
<i>rsIMSS</i>	-1.6 (0.000)	1.1 (0.000)	4.4 (0.000)	-5.6 (0.000)	.1 NS (0.048)
<i>rsLn_NoBasicServices</i>	2.3 (0.000)	2.0 (0.000)	-5.9 (0.000)	3.5 (0.000)	.4 (0.000)
Adjusted R2	.203	.302	.362	.141	.155

TABLE 8. Regression models to explain the averages of the 1991-2018 period (continuation)

Models	Dependent variables (% averages 1991-2018)				
	Turnout	PRI	PAN	PRD	Others
3 (Constant)	58.4 (0.000)	40.5 (0.000)	26.2 (0.000)	16.1 (0.000)	17.2 (0.000)
<i>rsLS</i>	2.7 (0.000)	.6 (0.000)	1.4 (0.000)	-1.5 (0.000)	-5 (0.000)
rsSchooling	9.9 (0.000)	-12.2 (0.000)	12.0 (0.000)	-2.1 (0.000)	2.3 (0.000)
rsSq_Immigrants	-3.6 (0.000)	-4 (0.000)	2.1 (0.000)	-1.2 (0.000)	-4 (0.000)
rsYouth15-24	-1.3 (0.000)	0.3 NS (0.004)	-1.5 (0.000)	.6 (0.000)	.6 (0.000)
rsCatholics	3.3 (0.000)	-8 (0.000)	4.6 (0.000)	-2.3 (0.000)	-1.5 (0.000)
rsSqISTE	-1.8 (0.000)	-9 (0.000)	-8.7 (0.000)	7.4 (0.000)	2.3 (0.000)
rsIMSS	-1.5 (0.000)	1.1 (0.000)	4.4 (0.000)	-5.6 (0.000)	0.2 NS (0.027)
rsLn_NoBasicServices	2.3 (0.000)	1.8 (0.000)	-6.1 (0.000)	3.7 (0.000)	.6 (0.000)
<i>Indigenous_Yucatan</i>	11.3 (0.000)	7.5 (0.000)	12.6 (0.000)	-11.1 (0.000)	-9.0 (0.000)
Indigenous_Puebla	-2.8 (0.000)	1.8 NS (0.010)	0.4 NS (0.588)	-3.0 (0.000)	0.8 NS (0.029)
Indigenous_SanLuis	4.6 (0.000)	-2.3 NS (0.002)	8.3 (0.000)	-3.5 (0.000)	-2.5 (0.000)
Indigenous_Chiapas	-.2 NS (0.657)	-4.6 (0.000)	-7.9 (0.000)	4.8 (0.000)	7.7 (0.000)
Indigenous_Oaxaca	-7.1 (0.000)	-3.8 (0.000)	-7.5 (0.000)	7.5 (0.000)	3.8 (0.000)
Indigenous_Guerrero	-6.4 (0.000)	-11.0 (0.000)	-12.5 (0.000)	19.5 (0.000)	3.9 (0.000)
<i>Indigenous_Huicot</i>	-7.1 (0.000)	14.5 (0.000)	-.9 NS (0.560)	-8.9 (0.000)	-4.7 (0.000)
Adjusted R2	.226	.310	.377	.163	.180
N = 57 930					

Source: Own elaboration based on INEGI-IFE (2012), IFE (2012) and INE (2018). Except indicated otherwise with NS. All values $p < 0.001$. *Note:* all coefficients significant at 0.01 level, unless otherwise stated; p -values in parentheses.

trast to PAN which captures an average of -5.8 points less than in the mestizo sections (model 1 of Table 8). However, these coefficients change substantially when controlling by other socio-demographic variables, with the indigenous sections acquiring a positive value of +2.1 percentage points for electoral participation and decreasing to less than one percentage point for the distribution of partisan votes. In fact, these other socio-demographic factors are much more relevant to explain the sectional variations in the electoral behavior of Mexicans (model 2 of Table 8).

Electoral participation, for example, is positively associated with higher sectional levels of schooling (+10 points), Catholic population (+3.1 points) and homes without basic services (+2.3 points), while it decreases in the sections with the highest presence of immigrants, young people and beneficiaries of ISSSTE and IMSS. As shown by the corrected r^2 of models 1 and 2, together these variables explain 20 per cent of the total variance, while the ethno-linguistic variable by itself bears little explanatory power. Likewise, the coefficients of the percentage of indigenous language speakers lose their relevance to explain partisan voting. In the case of PRI, the most relevant variable is clearly the schooling average (-12.1 points), which has an exactly inverse effect on the PAN vote (+12.2 points). The latter party also benefits from the greater presence of Catholics (+4.5 points) and IMSS beneficiaries (+4.4 points), in contrast to the PRD that is more successful in the sections with more ISSSTE beneficiaries (+7.5 points) and with deficiencies in basic services (+3.5 points).

The poor explanatory capacity of the ethno-linguistic variable is largely due to its internal heterogeneity. When the dummy variables of the seven indigenous regions that we previously distinguished are introduced, relevant and statistically significant variations appear. As model 3 of Table 8 illustrates, the Mayan sections of the Yucatan Peninsula are characterized by impressive rates of electoral participation (+11.3 percentage points more than the national average) and by a much stronger presence of PAN (+12.6 points) and PRI (+7.5 points) compared to PRD (-11.1 percentage points) and the rest of political parties (-9.0 points). Also, the overrepresentation of Partido Acción Nacional in the indigenous sections of the Huasteca Potosina (+8.3) contrasts with the overrepresentation of the PRI in the Huicot-Tarahumara sections (+14.5 points) and of the PRD in Montaña de Guerrero (+19.5 percentage points). This illustrates the great diversity of partisan configurations that coexist within the indigenous universe, where many political worlds fit (Table 8).

I also built other models to check whether the global averages are masking substantive changes over time. Although the coefficients vary slightly in intensity, the core results are robust and consistent with the trends seen in figures 7-10. Let us look, for example, at the coefficients of the same dependent variables for the 1997-2006 period. Unlike model 1, which only captures the bilateral effects of the ethno-linguistic variable (and barely captures between 0.4 and 6.2 per cent of the total variance), the other socio-demographic factors explain between 13.8 per cent and

40.1 per cent of the total variance —making the linguistic variable less relevant. Only turnout is slightly higher in sections with greater percentages of indigenous language speakers.

Indeed, the most important variable is clearly the sectional average of years of schooling, with strong positive effects on electoral participation (+12.2 points) and the PAN vote (+14.9 points), as well as negative effects on the PRI vote (-14.6 points). In turn, a higher proportion of Catholics is associated with higher levels of electoral participation (+3.8 points) and PAN voting (+5.2 points), as well as lower rates of votes for PRI (-2.6 points) and PRD (-2.8 points). Likewise, the sectional rates of access to health services help explain the greater success of PRD in the sections with the most beneficiaries of the ISSSTE (+10.6 points), and PAN in the sections with the most beneficiaries of the IMSS (+5.5 percentage points). Finally, the households with more shortages in basic services are positively associated with the PRI vote and the PRD vote and have a negative effect on the PAN vote (-8 percentage points).

But above all, the usefulness of the regional ethno-linguistic variables is confirmed, not so much to increase the explanatory power of the models (in which the corrected r^2 does not increase substantially) but in order to capture the heterogeneity of their effects (model 3 of Table 9). Once again, the predominantly Mayan sections of the Yucatan Peninsula are characterized by very high rates of electoral participation (+10.6 points), by a very strong presence of PAN (+11.9 points) and PRI (+6.7 points) and by the weakness of PRD (which captures -14.7 points less). Also, the overrepresentation of PAN is confirmed in the indigenous sections of the Huasteca Potosina (+11.7 points), in contrast to the hegemony of PRI in the Huicot-Tarahumara sections (+12.7 points) and PRD in Montaña de Guerrero (+23.4 points). Hence the need to place the different ethno-linguistic communities in their specific territorial contexts.

I close this section with a brief discussion of the most recent federal elections, in order to locate the socio-demographic profile of the winning party, the Movimiento Regeneración Nacional, before and after the electoral tsunami unleashed by AMLO's third presidential candidacy. While in 2015 Morena was more successful in sections with higher levels of schooling (where it practically doubled its electoral results), its exponential growth canceled the effects of this variable in the 2018 legislative elections, and actually turned the coefficient into the opposite direction for the presidential elections (in which AMLO obtained -8.7 percentage points less in high-schooling sections than in those with low schooling).

Indeed, it is noteworthy that the effects of the same variable remained relatively constant in the case of PAN (which obtained +11.6 points more in the better educated sections), but they weakened considerably in the case of PRI (which only lost -5.1 points in them). Likewise, both Morena and AMLO managed to grow in the sections with higher proportions of young people and of beneficiaries of the ISSSTE and

TABLE 9. Regression models to explain the averages of the 1991-2018 period

		Dependent variables (% average 1997-2006)				
Models		Turnout	PRI	PAN	PRD	Others
1	(Constant)	55.1	40.6	30.3	23.0	6.1
	<i>rs/LS</i>	-1.5	6.5	-7.8	1.9	-6
	Adjusted R2	.006	.048	.062	.004	.006
2	(Constant)	55.0	40.4	30.8	22.6	6.2
	<i>rs/LS</i>	1.9	0.2 NS (0.099)	0 NS (0.951)	-0.4 NS (0.002)	0.2
	<i>rsSchooling</i>	12.2	-14.6	14.9	-2.2	1.9
	<i>rsSq_Immigrants</i>	-3.7	-1.2	2.3	-1.2	0.1
	<i>rsYouth15-24</i>	-2.0	0.9	-1.5	0.7	-1
	<i>rsCatholics</i>	3.8	-2.6	5.2	-2.8	0.3
	<i>rsSqISTE</i>	-1.9	-1.4	-10.4	10.6	1.2
	<i>rsIMSS</i>	-0.5	0.9	5.5	-6.9	0.5
	<i>rsCatholics</i>	1.5	2.8	-8.0	4.6	0.6
	Adjusted R2	.252	.314	.390	.133	.130
3	(Constant)	55.1	40.4	30.9	22.5	6.2
	<i>rs/LS</i>	2.9	0.4 NS (0.034)	1.3	-1.9	0.2
	<i>rsSchooling</i>	12.0	-14.6	14.6	-2.0	2.0
	<i>rsSq_Immigrants</i>	-3.5	-1.1	2.6	-1.5	0.1 NS (0.002)
	<i>rsYouth15-24</i>	-1.9	0.9	-1.4	0.6	-0.1
	<i>rsCatholics</i>	3.9	-2.5	5.4	-3.2	0.3
	<i>rsSqISTE</i>	-1.8	-1.4	-10.4	10.5	1.2
	<i>rsIMSS</i>	-0.4	0.9	5.5	-6.9	0.5
	<i>rsLn_NoBasicServices</i>	1.4	2.8	-8.2	4.8	.07
	<i>Indigenous_Yucatan</i>	10.6	6.7	11.9	-14.7	-4.0
	<i>Indigenous_Puebla</i>	-2.9	5.0	-2.0 NS (0.019)	-2.9 NS (0.003)	-1 NS (0.577)
	<i>Indigenous_SanLuis</i>	5.1	-4.4	11.7	-5.6	-1.7
	<i>Indigenous_Chiapas</i>	-7.0	1.0 NS (0.190)	-7.9	5.6	1.3
	<i>Indigenous_Oaxaca</i>	-5.3	-1.4 NS (0.017)	-7.9	8.1	1.2
	<i>Indigenous_Guerrero</i>	-8.7	-9.2	-14.0	23.4	-1 NS (0.594)
	<i>Indigenous_Huicot</i>	-5.2	12.7	0.3 NS (0.869)	-10.8	-2.1
	Adjusted R2	.268	.318	.401	.152	.138
	N = 61 492					

Source: Own elaboration based on INEGI-IFE (2012), IFE (2012) and INE (2018). Except indicated otherwise with NS. All values $p < 0.001$. *Note:* all coefficients significant at 0.01 level, unless otherwise stated; p -values in parentheses.

the IMSS, whose preferences used to benefit PRD and PAN, respectively. The only type of sections in which Morena's penetration was more limited corresponds to the proportion of Catholics (-9.8 points), which was more favorable to the PAN vote (+4.5 percentage points) and, to a lesser extent, to PRI (+2.7 points). Therefore, the 2018 electoral tsunami really blurred the main socio-demographic cleavages that had been structuring Mexican electoral policy since the 1990s.

Regarding the patterns in the different indigenous regions, AMLO only obtained a substantive advantage in the predominantly indigenous sections of Oaxaca (+15.1 points) and Guerrero (+8 points), while registering much lower results in the Huasteca Potosina (-9.1 points) and Poblana (-4.6 points), in the Selva Lacandona and Los Altos de Chiapas (-9 points) but, above all, in the Huicot-Tarahumara (-20.7 points) and Mayan sections of Yucatan (-21.5 points). In effect, the latter re-

TABLE 10. Seven regression models to capture the 2018 electoral tsunami

Dependent variables (% , legislative and presidential elections of)							
Model	Morena 15-L	Morena 18-L	AMLO 18-P	PRI 18-L	PAN 18-L	PRD 18-L	Turnout 18-L
1 (Constant)	8.9 (0.000)	35.9 (0.000)	52.6 (0.000)	18.8 (0.000)	18.8 (0.000)	5.6 (0.000)	63.9 (0.000)
<i>rs</i> ILS	-8 (0.000)	-1.4 (0.000)	-7 (0.000)	2.3 (0.000)	-3.3 (0.000)	1.5 (0.000)	3.4 (0.000)
Adjusted R2	.002	.002	.000	.010	.013	.008	.027
2 (Constant)	8.8 (0.000)	35.8 (0.000)	52.5 (0.000)	18.9 (0.000)	18.8 (0.000)	5.7 (0.000)	63.8 (0.000)
<i>rs</i> ILS	1.0 (0.000)	-1.0 (0.000)	-2.0 (0.000)	.1 (0.238)	.2 (0.084)	-2 (0.001)	4.0 (0.000)
<i>rs</i> Schooling	7.0 (0.000)	-4 NS (0.049)	-8.7 (0.000)	-5.1 (0.000)	11.6 (0.000)	-2.9 (0.000)	12.5 (0.000)
<i>rs</i> Sq_Immigrants	-1.3 (0.000)	.3 NS (0.006)	1.0 (0.000)	-1.1 (0.000)	.0 NS (0.931)	-6 (0.000)	-5.7 (0.000)
<i>rs</i> Youth15-24	-1.1 (0.000)	2.9 (0.000)	4.6 (0.000)	-1.3 (0.000)	-3.0 (0.000)	.3 (0.000)	-5 (0.000)
<i>rs</i> Catholics	-3.0 (0.000)	-9.2 (0.000)	-9.8 (0.000)	2.7 (0.000)	4.5 (0.000)	.5 (0.000)	1.0 (0.000)
<i>rs</i> SqISTE	3.5 (0.000)	8.2 (0.000)	12.6 (0.000)	-2 NS (0.051)	-6.9 (0.000)	2.5 (0.000)	.9 (0.000)
<i>rs</i> IMSS	-1.8 (0.000)	.8 (0.000)	2.0 (0.000)	.0 NS (0.996)	.0 NS (0.955)	-2.3 (0.000)	-4.6 (0.000)
<i>rs</i> Ln_ NoBasicServices	1.8 (0.000)	1.0 (0.000)	.8 (0.000)	1.7 (0.000)	-8 (0.000)	1.8 (0.000)	6.9 (0.000)
Adjusted R2	.218	.180	.163	.121	.105	.089	.243

TABLE 10. Seven regression models to capture the 2018 electoral tsunami (continuation)

Dependent variables (% legislative and presidential elections of)							
Model	Morena 15-L	Morena 18-L	AMLO 18-P	PRI 18-L	PAN 18-L	PRD 18-L	Turnout 18-L
3 (Constant)	8.7 (0.000)	35.9 (0.000)	52.5 (0.000)	18.8 (0.000)	19.0 (0.000)	5.6 (0.000)	63.8 (0.000)
<i>rsILS</i>	.5 (0.000)	-.4 NS (0.038)	-2.0 (0.000)	.1 NS (0.705)	2.0 (0.000)	-1.2 (0.000)	3.9 (0.000)
<i>rsSchooling</i>	7.0 (0.000)	-.3 NS (0.175)	-8.7 (0.000)	-5.2 (0.000)	11.3 (0.000)	-2.9 (0.000)	12.5 (0.000)
<i>rsSq_Immigrants</i>	-1.3 (0.000)	.3 (0.035)	.9 (0.000)	-1.0 (0.000)	.2 (0.069)	-.7 (0.000)	-5.6 (0.000)
<i>rsYouth15-24</i>	-1.1 (0.000)	3.0 (0.000)	4.6 (0.000)	-1.2 (0.000)	-2.9 (0.000)	.3 (0.000)	-5 (0.000)
<i>rsCatholics</i>	-3.2 (0.000)	-9.5 (0.000)	-10.3 (0.000)	2.9 (0.000)	4.5 (0.000)	.3 (0.000)	1.2 (0.000)
<i>rsSqISTE</i>	3.5 (0.000)	8.0 (0.000)	12.4 (0.000)	-.2 NS (0.121)	-6.9 (0.000)	2.5 (0.000)	1.1 (0.000)
<i>rsIMSS</i>	-1.8 (0.000)	.7 (0.000)	1.9 (0.000)	.0 NS (0.884)	.0 NS (0.963)	-2.2 (0.000)	-4.5 (0.000)
<i>rsLn_ NoBasicServices</i>	1.8 (0.000)	1.0 (0.000)	.8 (0.000)	1.7 (0.000)	-1.1 (0.000)	1.8 (0.000)	7.0 (0.000)
<i>Indigenous_ Yucatan</i>	-6.2	-19.3 (0.000)	-21.5 (0.000)	16.1 (0.000)	9.6 (0.000)	-.5 NS (0.363)	14.7 (0.000)
<i>Indigenous_ Puebla</i>	.3 NS	-5.2 (0.000)	-4.6 (0.000)	4.0 (0.000)	4.1 (0.000)	-3 NS (0.586)	7.0 (0.000)
<i>Indigenous_ SanLuis</i>	-3.8	-17.3 (0.000)	-9.1 (0.000)	4.8 (0.000)	4.2 (0.000)	2.9 (0.000)	-2.2 NS (0.001)
<i>Indigenous_ Chiapas</i>	-3.4	-7.3 (0.000)	-9.0 (0.000)	-1.2 NS (0.047)	-9.8 (0.000)	-.1 NS (0.832)	5.0 (0.000)
<i>Indigenous_ Oaxaca</i>	11.2	12.5 (0.000)	15.1 (0.000)	-5.0 (0.000)	-11.6 (0.000)	3.5 (0.000)	-7.6 (0.000)
<i>Indigenous_ Guerrero</i>	-1 NS	1.6 NS (0.073)	8.0 (0.000)	-6.7 (0.000)	-13.1 (0.000)	11.7 (0.000)	-9 NS (0.099)
<i>Indigenous_ Huicot</i>	-2.7 NS	-16.3 (0.000)	-20.7 (0.000)	17.4 (0.000)	-.4 NS (0.826)	-5.0 (0.000)	-11.1 (0.000)
Adjusted R2	.237	.198	.182	.136	.118	.098	.261
N = 65 201							

Source: Own elaboration based on INEGI-IFE (2012), IFE (2012) and INE (2018). Except indicated otherwise with NS. All values $p < 0.001$. *Note:* all coefficients significant at 0.01 level, unless otherwise stated; p -values in parentheses.

mained loyal to PRI and PAN, in the same way that the indigenous sections of Guerrero continued to vote in a greater proportion for PRD (+11.7 percentage points). In any case, it is striking that the vote as a whole in these regions did not favor López Obrador to a greater extent, who obtained a negative electoral balance in the indigenous sections. Finally, indigenous turnout further confirmed the great internal heterogeneity of the linguistic factor, with impressive differences between the Yucatecan Mayans (+14.7 points) and the Tarahumaras-Huicot (-11.1 points).

In short, the explanatory capacity of the socio-demographic factors we use here as control variables is much more relevant and robust to capture the electoral patterns of Mexicans than the percentage of indigenous language speakers. Contrary to a recurring but erroneous myth, turnout rates are significantly higher on average in indigenous sections. However, there is no common pattern of electoral behavior among them. Rather, highly participatory indigenous regions (the Mayans of Yucatan) and highly abstentionists (the Tarahumaras-Huicot or the indigenous people of Guerrero) co-exist, which challenges the idea of a homogeneous or unified indigenous electoral body.

This is even truer when the partisan orientation of the vote is analyzed. As the multivariate regression models show, speaking an indigenous language does not have much explanatory power. On the other hand, strongly differentiated behaviors are observed among the different ethnic-linguistic regions (with markedly PAN orientations among the Yucatecan Mayas; PRD among the Mixtecos, Nahuas, Tlapanecos and Guerrero Amuzgos; or PRI orientations among the northern Tarahumara-Huicot). This illustrates the great diversity of electoral patterns within the different indigenous territories. This heterogeneity refers to geographical and historical specificities that must be recognized, located and explored. Therefore, it is of little use to speak of “an indigenous vote”, and far more appropriate to think of different regions with differentiated electoral patterns.

A plural universe of indigenous worlds: four challenges to improve political inclusion

The pluralism of the indigenous world is worth highlighting. In 2018, electoral participation was higher in almost all of its regions, where party systems are just as fragmented as in the rest of the country. Rather than *one vote*, it is more convenient to speak of *various indigenous votes*. As a whole, the predominantly indigenous sections are not characterized by any specific political behavior. And, when the electoral effects of the percentage of indigenous language speakers in the section are compared with the electoral effects of other socio-demographic factors, the latter are usually much more relevant (particularly, the level of education in the section). Certainly, the average level of electoral participation does end up being slightly higher in indigenous sections than in mestizo sections. However, this is not the case

for the sectional distribution of the PRI vote, the PAN vote, or the PRD vote, the variation of which is mostly explained by educational levels, access to health services, or lack of basic services, as well as by the sectional proportion of young people, immigrants or Catholics.

This is related to the internal heterogeneity of the ethno-linguistic category. This contains an array of populations with strongly differentiated and sometimes diametrically opposed behaviors, which must be studied in their specific socio-territorial contexts. For the 1991-2018 period, the electoral participation averages varied up to 18 percentage points between the highly participatory Mayan sections of the Yucatan peninsula and the abstentionist sections of Montaña de Guerrero, while the differences between the over-/under-representation of the main parties reach up to 24.6 percentage points for PAN, 25.3 points for PRI and 30 points in the case of PRD, with coefficients twice as high as the level of education in the section (the socio-demographic variable of greatest weight).

These findings have important implications for the political inclusion of indigenous populations. Contrary to the dualistic image that homogenizes them and conceals their internal diversity, the careful study of electoral results reveals a wide rainbow of political preferences that coexist within indigenous territories. This means that indigenous identities must be placed in different geographic, demographic, economic and sociocultural contexts. We have before us a highly diverse group of populations that may inhabit as indisputable majorities in exclusively indigenous communities, or migrate and live in multicultural, mixed or mestizo environments where they become more or less (in)visible minorities.


The design of public policies that promote greater political inclusion of indigenous populations must start from the recognition of their internal diversity. A first challenge concerns the relevant level in which political representation is organized: is it necessary to have specific legal instruments for the 28,000 localities, for the 565 municipalities, for the 23 regions or for the ten entities where most of the indigenous communities live?

As aforementioned, the demographic heterogeneity and the territorial distribution of the ethno-linguistic groups in Mexico invite us to rethink indigenous political representation in multicultural territorial contexts. Despite its geographic concentration, only 57 per cent of indigenous language speakers reside in sections with more than 65 per cent of indigenous language speakers, while 35 per cent of them live in sections with less than 50 per cent, and 25 per cent in sections with less than 30 per cent of indigenous language speakers. Thus, a substantial part of these populations lives in culturally mixed contexts or in eminently mestizo contexts. At what level and through what tools, then, should we design public policy? And what type of political representation for what type of indigenous sectors should be considered?

For the time being, Mexican reforms have resorted to, above all, majority mechanisms of *affirmative gerrymandering*. The redistricting of 2004-2005 and 2016-2017 designed 28 districts with a deliberate ethno-linguistic bias, while the affirmative action measures launched in 2017 sought to force the nomination of indigenous candidates in at least thirteen of those districts. A first step would be to recognize that the issue cannot be solved solely by these means and that complementary strategies must be used, with a logic of proportional quotas or reserved candidacies.

For example, a sixth plurinominal federal constituency could be created, reserved for indigenous candidates, as was done in Colombia to promote the legislative representation of indigenous and Afro-mestizo populations. Another alternative is to create incentives for the parties themselves to include indigenous candidates in their proportional representation lists, eventually including quota systems in entities or regions with strong indigenous presence. Likewise, the successful experience of “*affirmative malapportionment*” in Panama is worth mentioning, where the creation of constituencies with two or three seats in the indigenous regions allows them to be over-represented in relation to the mestizo single-member districts (Sonnleitner, 2010). In any case, the fact that Mexico has a mixed representation system could be positively exploited. Electoral engineering opens up many possibilities to combine majority mechanisms (for communities residing in indigenous territories) and proportional mechanisms (for those residing in mixed or mestizo contexts).

Thirdly, the challenge of socio-economic marginalization is worth stressing. Social exclusion does not only afflict indigenous populations but affect broad sectors of the mestizo population as well. However, most indigenous communities live in contexts of high marginalization or extreme poverty, which hinders their political inclusion. Their representation cannot ignore the conditions of material inequality in which those who aspire to public office compete.

Finally, one last challenge must not be dismissed, that is, the counterproductive effects that positive discrimination can cause: formally recognizing indigenous identities as subjects of exclusive public policy entails the risk of creating unexpected dynamics of exclusion and resentment among non-indigenous sectors. This could feed or reproduce old and new practices of paternalism and racism under the guise of benevolent discourses that could break the existing consensus on the legitimacy of indigenous political inclusion. 

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ANNEX

Descriptive variables						
Estadistics	N valid	Min.	Max.	Mean	Median	Standard deviation
pILS	66 682	0.0	100.0	6.4	0.6	19.1
Schooling	66 740	0.0	18.0	8.3	8.2	2.5
Immigrants	66 685	0.0	100.0	14.3	13.5	5.2
Youth15-24	66 682	0.0	98.3	13.1	13.0	2.9
pCatholics	66 685	0.0	100.0	83.7	85.9	12.8
ISTE	66 685	0.0	100.0	5.7	3.6	6.2
IMSS	66 685	0.0	100.0	29.5	30.7	20.4
No_Basic_Services	66 684	0.0	100.0	16.9	10.9	15.4
PART_9118	59 730	14.1	96.7	58.3	58.6	7.7
PRI_9118	58 793	2.9	92.5	40.2	39.3	12.0
PAN_9118	58 793	0.0	74.5	25.6	25.1	12.7
PRD_9118	58 793	0.1	83.9	16.7	13.7	11.6
OTHERS_9118	58 793	0.6	49.6	17.4	17.4	5.8
PART_9706	62 578	0.0	100.0	54.8	55.3	9.6
PRI_9706	62 391	0.3	99.1	40.5	39.1	14.9
PAN_9706	62 390	0.0	85.5	30.2	29.6	15.8
PRD_9706	62 390	0.0	99.2	23.2	19.7	15.5
OTHERS_9706	62 390	0.0	35.4	6.2	5.8	3.7
pMORENA_15	67 287	0.0	98.4	8.8	5.7	8.9
pMORENA_18D	65 690	0.0	100.0	35.9	36.4	15.7
pAMLO_18P	65 702	0.0	100.0	52.7	54.4	17.4
pPRI_18D	65 690	0.0	100.0	18.8	16.2	11.4
pPAN_18D	65 690	0.0	90.7	18.8	15.4	14.1
pPRD_18D	65 690	0.0	95.4	5.6	2.2	8.5

Source: Own elaboration based on INEGI-IFE (2012), IFE (2012) and INE (2018).

The Power of Vote

Electoral Change and National Party System in Mexico 2018*

Sebastián Garrido and Flavia Freidenberg**

ABSTRACT: This paper analyzes how the Mexican electorate modified the configuration of the party system after the 2018 election. By analyzing the structure and dynamics of electoral competition, it explores different dimensions to determine the magnitude of electoral change and how it has translated into the party system after this election. The paper compares the results of the presidential and legislative elections between 1994–2018. This research offers a historical perspective of the magnitude of the changes registered during this election in both the structure of electoral competition (the massive reorientation of the vote in large part of the country, the re-concentration of power in one party, the reduction of partisan fragmentation and the changes in the nationalization of the vote of the leading forces) and the dynamics of electoral competition (the emergence of the first unified party government since 1994, the carryover effect of the presidential election in the legislative election results).

KEYWORDS: elections, political parties, party system, structure of electoral competition, dynamic of competition.

El poder del voto: Cambio electoral y sistemas de partidos a nivel federal en México en 2018

RESUMEN: Este trabajo analiza el modo en que el electorado mexicano cambió la configuración del sistema de partidos tras la elección de julio de 2018. A través del análisis de la estructura y dinámica de competencia, se exploran diversas dimensiones para determinar la magnitud del cambio electoral y su traducción en el sistema de partidos tras esta elección. Para ello se comparan los resultados de las elecciones presidencial y de diputados federales en 2018 con el de las elecciones celebradas desde comienzos de la década de 1990. Esta investigación ofrece una perspectiva histórica de la

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magnitud de los cambios registrados en esta elección tanto en la estructura de competencia (la masiva reorientación del voto en buena parte del país, la reconcentración de poder en un partido, la reducción de la fragmentación partidista y los cambios en la nacionalización de voto de las principales fuerzas) como la dinámica de competencia (el surgimiento del primer gobierno de partido unificado desde 1994, el efecto de arrastre de la elección presidencial en los resultados legislativos).

PALABRAS CLAVE: elecciones, partidos y sistemas de partidos, estructura de competencia, dinámica de competencia.

INTRODUCTION

Mexico held a historic election on July 1, 2018. It was the biggest and most complex election day that the country has had to date.¹ Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) and the National Regeneration Movement (Spanish: *Movimiento Regeneración Nacional*, Morena)—a political party created in 2014—led a drastic reconfiguration of political power based on the change in the electoral preferences of citizens. It was the third time that AMLO had run for president and this time he managed to achieve a difference of more than thirty points over the second competitor, also generating a strong coattail effect on the election of the other federal and sub-national institutional positions (deputations, senators, governors, mayors).

Citizens actively participated on the day of the election and cleared up much of the uncertainty that had surrounded the electoral process. It was the first presidential election held under new rules, adopted in 2014, that defined a new model of electoral governance and increasingly more robust rules—including gender perspective—for the candidacy registration of federal and local representative positions.

This electoral process once again revealed how the Mexican party system is an exciting laboratory for comparative politics, given that in the last decades, it has undergone substantial changes in terms of greater party competition.² Those changes were accompanied by an increasingly significant rise in political pluralism, coming from a hegemonic party system and evolving into one of limited pluralism (Alarcón Olguín and Reyes del Campillo, 2016; Greene, 2007; Magaloni, 2006). Historically, the transformations of the Mexican party system have been originated fundamentally by electoral reforms carried out since 1977. Several researches (Garrido de Sierra, 2019; Méndez de Hoyos, 2003) have described the

¹ That day, Mexicans elected the president of the Republic, 500 federal deputies and 128 senators. Additionally, in nine states, the governor (or Head of Government) was elected, in 27 entities the local congresses were renewed as well as in 25 town halls (or “*alcaldías*”). In total, 3 206 positions were elected at the federal, state, and municipal levels (INE, 2018a). The only two entities that did not hold any sort of local election were Baja California and Nayarit.

² Parties are “the political groups that participate in the elections to make their members access positions of popular representation, compete and cooperate to maximize their power options” (Sartori, 1992: 90).

relationship between these institutional variables and their effects on the competition of the party system.

Unlike the classic institutionalist vision of change focused on the effect of electoral rules, the 2018 election showed that individual political behavior could change the characteristics of the party system. The elections carried out amid a political representation crisis and distrust of citizens towards parties, and traditional politics (Latinobarómetro, 2018; Robles and Benton 2018; Cantú and Hoyo, 2017),³ once again revealed that —despite this crisis— the electorate still chose parties (in this case, a movement created in 2011), demonstrating that partisan labels continue to play a significant role in Latin American politics despite political, social and economic crises (Freidenberg, 2016).

This article aims to describe the magnitude of the electoral change and its translation into the party system after the July 2018 election, comparing this process diachronically with the federal elections held since the beginning of the 1990s —the 1991 legislative elections and the 1994 presidential elections.⁴ The article offers a comparative historical perspective of the magnitude of the changes registered in 2018 in both the competition structure (the massive reorientation of the vote in much of the country, the re-concentration of power in one party, the reduction of partisan fragmentation and changes in the nationalization of the vote of the leading forces) and the dynamics of competition (the emergence of the first unified party government since 1994, the carryover effect of the presidential election on the legislative election results).

The article divides into five parts. In the first, it discusses various theoretical elements enabling a comparative approach to electoral change and the characteristics of the party system. The second describes the social and institutional context that influenced the decisions of voters and parties that participated in the election. The third describes the extent and magnitude of Andrés Manuel López Obrador's victory in the presidential election, comparing his performance with that of the winning candidates of the four previous presidential elections (1994-2012) and showing the transformations of competition in the party system. Fourth, to have elements that allow a greater understanding of the new dynamics of party system competi-

³ Distrust towards the government and political parties was very high in Mexico during 2018. According to data from Latinobarómetro (2018), only 11 per cent of Mexicans trusted political parties, while 16 per cent had confidence in the government. In 2006, confidence had registered levels close to 30 per cent for parties and 47 per cent for the government, according to existing data from the same Latinobarómetro, which shows the growing political distrust in recent years.

⁴ The comparisons begin in these years because they were the first legislative and presidential elections, respectively, organized by the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE), now the National Electoral Institute (INE). As will be seen later, even though the electoral competition was not yet fair in 1994, we decided to start the comparison of the presidential elections this year because the results of that election are the most similar reference to that of 2018.

tion, the changes in the legislative electoral results in the Chamber of Deputies are analyzed in a series of dimensions between 1991 and 2018. Finally, we analyze the Morena electoral tsunami and its effects on a party system that is still transforming.

THEORETICAL DISCUSSION AND METHODOLOGICAL DETAILS

A plural and competitive party system is essential for a political regime to be considered democratic (Schattschneider, 1964; Sartori, 1992; Caramani, 2008). Therefore, one of the main tools to assess the “health status” of a democracy is to analyze the structure and competition dynamics of its party system (Sartori, 1992; Mair, 1990; Caramani, 2008). Both the level of competitiveness and plurality of a party system can and usually do change over time as a result of the internal dynamics of the parties themselves (death of the leader, internal crisis, conflicts between factions); by the influence of external agents in the organization (media, other leaderships, social movements, international political organizations) as well as by the impact of electoral reforms and (or) changes in vote orientation towards political forces of the citizenry, among others.

Political Science studies party systems and their changes in two primary dimensions: the structure and dynamics of competition (Freidenberg, 2016; Caramani, 2008; Mair, 1990). The *structure of the competition* is the “heart of the party system” (Freidenberg, 2016; Sartori 1976, 1992). This dimension reveals the format of the competition (the number of parties that compete and their size), usually measured through different indicators, including the percentage of votes obtained by each party in an election (orientation of the vote towards a party), the percentage of geographical units where the winning candidate obtained the highest number of votes, the degree of fragmentation of the party supply and the nationalization level of the parties and the party system.

The *dynamics of competition* denote the competitive interactions amongst parties and their environment, which unveil strategies and programmatic positions of political parties, as well as the cooperation among the actors and the effects it has on the political system (Torcal, 2015; Caramani, 2008). This second dimension can be analyzed either by measuring how the relative strength of each political party changes over time or by the margin of the advantage of the first force concerning its closest competitor, indicating the level of uncertainty of the competition. Sartori (1976 and 1992) analyzes the level of polarization amongst parties, to understand the distance and/or the overlapping of their programmatic and ideological positions, and to establish the cooperation/conflict capacity of a party system.

The analysis of these partisan competition patterns should be carried out, taking a temporal continuum into account (Anduiza and Bosch, 2004: 91), as the comparison between electoral processes makes it easier to detect, understand and explain changes in the competition and plurality patterns of a party system. Establishing

the magnitude of change and its impact on the political system requires a comparison between the data from different elections.

In order to evaluate the transformations that voting can generate on the party system, this study uses a series of indicators of comparative politics that allow a better understanding of how the competitiveness and pluralism of the Mexican electoral system changed after the federal 2018 elections. These indicators measure the changes at the demand level (the orientation and change of vote) and the partisan supply level (the level of fragmentation and the effective number of parties, competitiveness, and the nationalization of support). These tools provide the means to compare—adhering to the measurements used in comparative politics—the transformations that party systems undergo over time and, thus, identify if the elections are similar or different from each other and how they affect the party system (Torcal, 2015).

SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The climate of the election

The Mexican party system, regarding various elements in Latin American comparative politics, is one of the most interesting ones. The system evolved from one of a hegemonic party (Greene, 2007; Magaloni, 2006), where one partisan organization was benefited by the State in terms of privilege and resources and could control the access and the exercise of political representation, to another more plural system. For decades, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Spanish: Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI), apart from directly or indirectly controlling the electoral and governmental organization, could set obstacles and difficulties in the way of opposition organizations (Langston, 2017; Alarcón Olgún and Reyes del Campillo, 2016; Greene, 2007; Magaloni, 2006).

The electoral reforms started “de-hegemonizing” competition, configuring a “system of limited pluralism” at the federal level (Alarcón Olgún and Reyes del Campillo, 2016), with multiple diverse competition scenarios at the subnational and local levels, accounting for strong authoritarian legacies that conditioned the party system (Greene and Sánchez-Talanquer, 2018). In the presidential election, despite the competition of various parties (PRI, PAN, PRD, and other small ones), only two partisan organizations managed to get their candidate to occupy the presidential seat: the PRI (1934-1994 and in 2012) and the PAN (2000 and 2006), with the consequent defeat of the left-wing forces (PRD) in each of their attempts to win the election.

As in previous elections (Freidenberg and Aparicio, 2016; Trejo and Ley, 2015; Palma, 2010), the 2018 federal elections were held in a context of insecurity and structural violence. Even though the process was carried out normally and peacefully on election day, the context in which the electoral campaign unfolded was one of the great social conflicts. According to data from the INE (2018b), only 27 candi-

dates for various positions suffered political violence during the electoral campaign. In contrast, journalistic investigations have reported a greater number of attacks on candidates for various positions and also on officials and journalists throughout the country.⁵ On this subject, it is also worth reviewing the work of Víctor Hernández in this same issue.

CHANGES IN THE STRUCTURE AND COMPETITION DYNAMICS IN THE MEXICAN PARTY SYSTEM

The results in the presidential election

AMLO won in almost every corner of the country

The distribution of support in the 2018 presidential election shows that the preferences were highly concentrated around a single candidate. Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) won the 2018 presidential election with 53.2 per cent of the votes. It is the most outstanding result in a presidential election since Carlos Salinas de Gortari was declared the winner with 48.7 per cent of the votes in 1988 (Molinar and Weldon, 2014). The fact that Morena, a recently created party, obtained this level of support illustrates the changes at the level of the electorate's preferences, mutating from other parties.

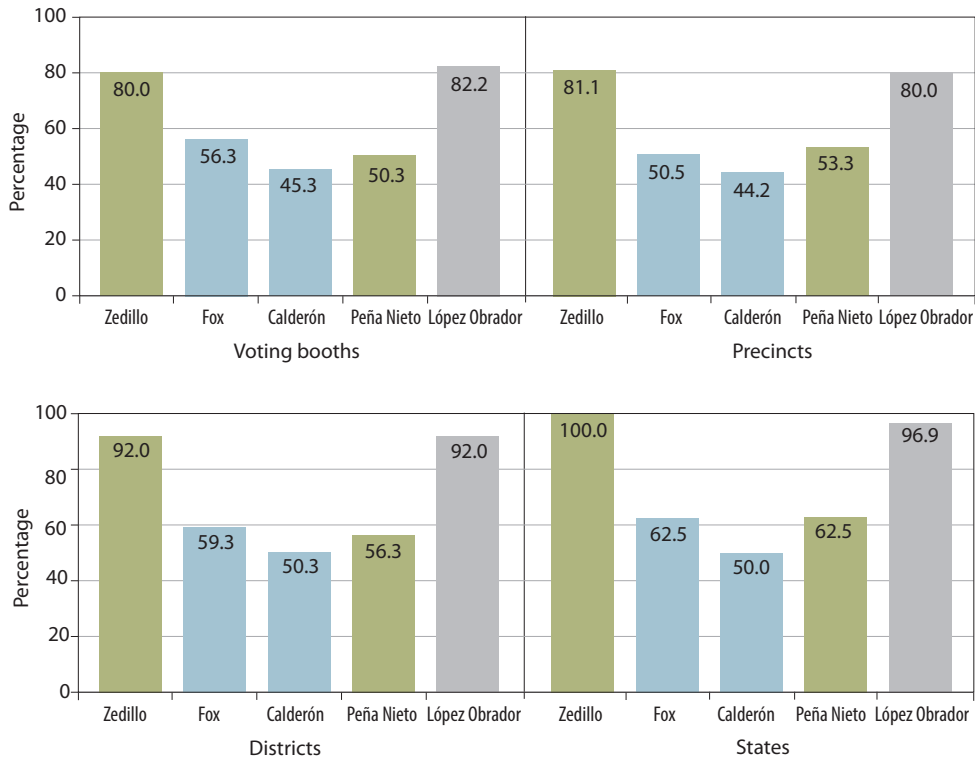
Regardless of the level of (de)aggregation in which the presidential election data is analyzed, the conclusion is the same: AMLO won in all instances of voting and in almost all corners of the country. Figure 1 includes four panels, each of which shows the percentage of voting booths, precincts, districts, and states⁶ obtained by the winning presidential candidate in each of the last five elections: Ernesto Zedillo (1994), Vicente Fox (2000), Felipe Calderón (2006), Enrique Peña Nieto (2012) and Andrés Manuel López Obrador (2018).

If we look specifically at the 2018 results, Figure 1 reveals that AMLO obtained more votes than any of his rivals in 80 per cent or more of the voting booths, precincts, and municipalities in Mexico. If districts and states are also analyzed as an aggregate unit of support, that figure increases to 92 and 96.9 per cent, respectively. With the same rules of the game as in previous elections, this candidate who had already competed and could not attain victory ended up winning. After several attempts (2006, 2012 and 2018), it was only in the most recent presidential election that a candidate from a new political movement (Morena), which began

⁵ The Etelekt Consultancy Firm indicator of political violence registered 774 attacks against politicians and 429 against officials for the 2017-2018 electoral process. Of these numbers, 152 politicians and 371 officials were killed (523 in total). Of the 152 politicians who lost their lives in attacks, 48 were pre-candidates and candidates for elected office. See Seventh Report on Political Violence in Mexico, published on the Etelekt Portal, Available at: <http://www.etelekt.com/reporte/septimo-informe-de-violencia-politica-en-mexico.html> [accessed on: April 9, 2019].

⁶ Both in Figure 1 and 4, we present descriptive statistics with different levels of aggregation. The purpose of this is to emphasize that the high percentage of votes obtained by López Obrador was not due to a particularly good performance in some areas of the country—in contrast to a second or third place in other regions—but instead to consistently good results in the most of the national territory.

FIGURE 1. Percentage of votes where the winning presidential candidate obtained the highest number of votes, 1994-2018

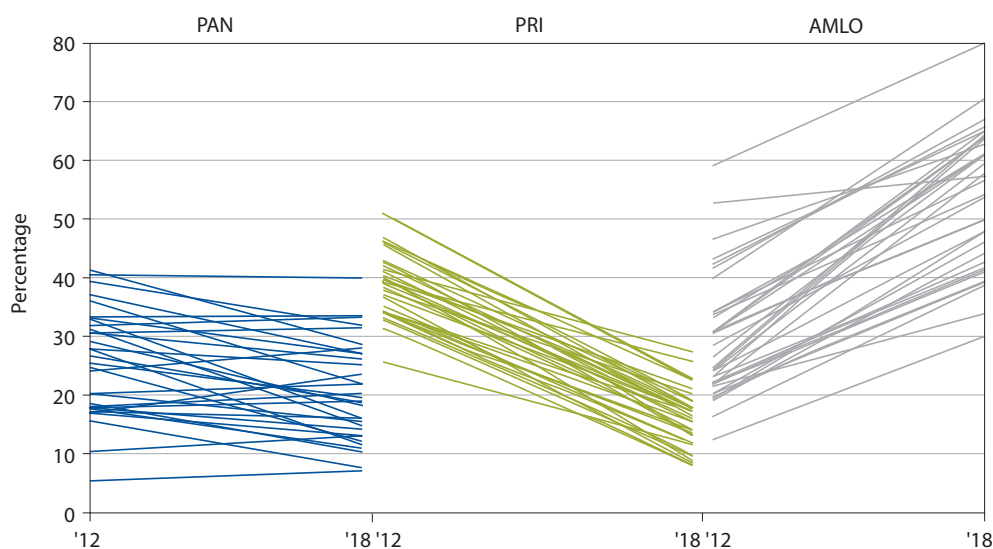


Source: Own elaboration based on official data.

to take shape seven years earlier and formally obtained its registration as a party in 2014, managed to win the presidential election. A broad movement made up of elites and factions from other groups (such as the PRD or PAN), left-wing intellectuals, and civil society organizations gathered around the leadership of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who was competing as a candidate for the third time in the presidential election.

Figure 1 also confirms that in the same sense that other works have shown (Torreblanca *et al.*, 2018), AMLO’s electoral success in 2018 spread to almost all corners of the country. It shows that the geographic magnitude of his victory exceeded that of any of the other winning presidential candidates since, at least, 1994. In comparative terms, the territorial extension of López Obrador’s presidential victory was very similar to that of Zedillo in the four geographic levels analyzed and far superior to that of the other three winning presidential candidates. AMLO won at least 25 per cent more voting booths, precincts, districts, and states than Fox, Calderón, and Peña Nieto.

FIGURE 2. Change in the percentage of votes obtained by main presidential candidates in 2012 and 2018, by state



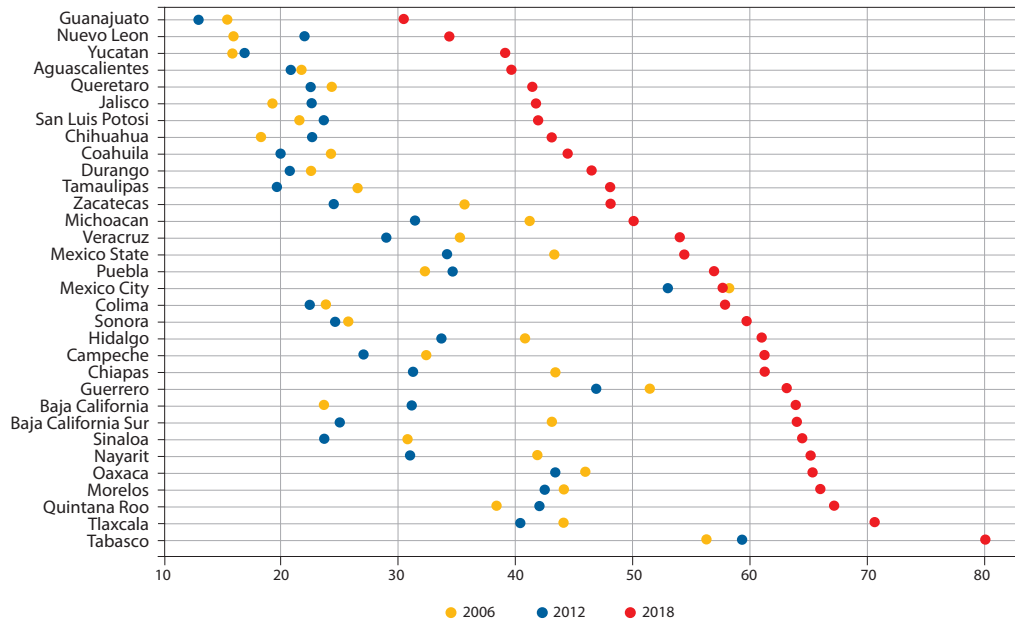
Source: Own elaboration based on official data.

Consistent with the data presented so far, López Obrador's performance in 2018 far exceeded his achievements in the 2006 and 2012 presidential elections. Figure 2 compares the percentage of votes obtained in the presidential elections by state in 2012 and 2018 for the party coalition candidacies led by the PAN, the PRI, and AMLO.

Between 2012 and 2018, López Obrador improved his voting percentages in the 32 entities of the country. These increases range from 4.76 per cent (Mexico City) to 40.8 per cent (Sinaloa). At the other end, the presidential candidate of the 2018 PRI-led coalition, José Antonio Meade, obtained lower voting percentages in all states compared to Enrique Peña Nieto in 2012. These percentage drops are between -13.3 per cent (Coahuila) and -33.4 per cent (Nayarit). Ricardo Anaya, the candidate of the PAN-led coalition, registered higher voting percentages than those of Josefina Vázquez Mota in 2012 in 10 states and worse percentages in the remaining 22.

Figure 3 offers a complementary perspective regarding the improvement of AMLO's electoral performance in 2018. It shows the percentage of votes López Obrador obtained in each state in the presidential elections of 2006 (yellow dots), 2012 (blue dots) and 2018 (red dots). The Figure reveals that, compared to 2006 and 2012, in 2018, AMLO obtained his highest voting percentages in all entities, except one (Mexico City).

FIGURE 3. Percentage of votes obtained by AMLO in 2006, 2012 and 2018 elections, by state



Source: Own elaboration based on official data.

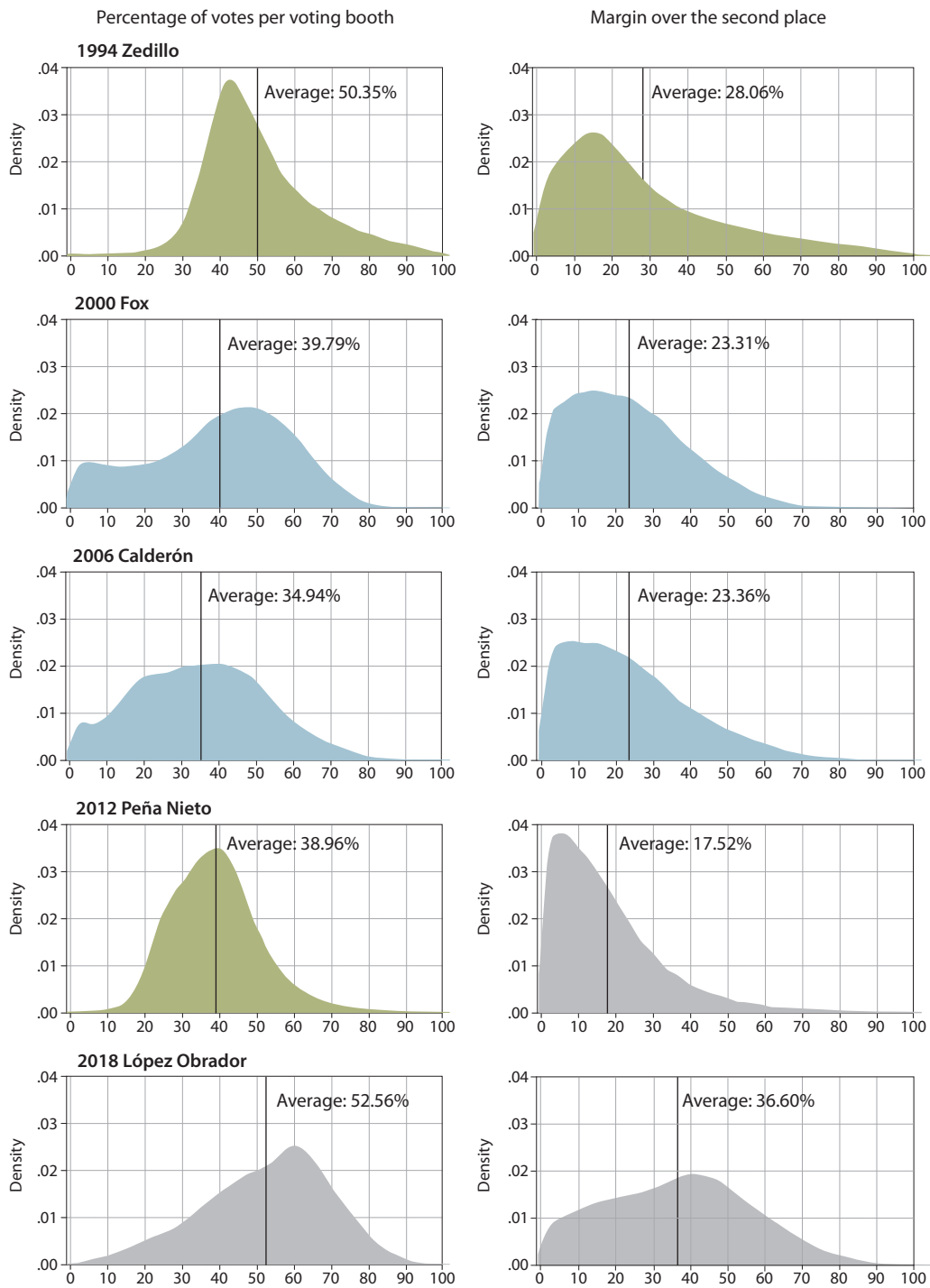
AMLO won with wide margins

The analysis of the 2018 results shows that López Obrador’s margin of victory against his opponents was enormous, which makes the uncertainty level of the competition small since the advantage over his competitors (measured by the public opinion polls) presented him as the winner weeks before the election. His advantage over the candidate who came in second was, on average, 36.6 per cent in voting booths, 35.4 per cent in precincts, 33.6 per cent in municipalities, 32.2 per cent in districts, and 33 per cent in states.

Figure 4 offers a historical comparison between the percentage of votes and the margin of the victory obtained by López Obrador at the voting booth-level in 2018 and those obtained by the four previous winning presidential candidates. The graphs in the left column show the distribution of the percentage of votes obtained by Zedillo, Fox, Calderón, Peña Nieto, and López Obrador. The graphs on the right illustrate the distribution of the advantage percentage obtained by each of these candidates.⁷ The higher the curve, the greater the number of voting booths in

⁷ Each of the five density charts only includes the margin of victory data of the voting booths where the respective presidential candidate won.

FIGURE 4. Percentage of votes and margin of victory of the winning presidential candidate over the second place, 1994–2018



Source: Own elaboration based on official data.

which the winning presidential candidate obtained that percentage of votes or margin of victory.

The contrast between AMLO's percentage distributions and vote margin and that of the other winning presidential candidates is significant. On the one hand, López Obrador obtained the highest average percentage of votes in the last five elections (52.6%). On the other hand, the average margin of victory for the Morena presidential candidate (36.6%) was substantially greater than that of the other four winning presidential candidates (between 17.5 and 28.1%).

Consequently, the pronounced right-skewness that characterizes the distribution of the margin of victory for Zedillo, Fox, Calderón, and Peña Nieto, was significantly reduced for AMLO. Another interesting fact is that while the average margin of victory for the winning presidential candidates fell by more than ten percentage points between 1994 and 2012, in 2018 López Obrador reversed this trend and managed to increase it by almost 20 percentage points if compared to the average margin obtained by Peña Nieto (17.5%) in the 2012 election.

THE ELECTORAL RESULTS AT THE LEGISLATIVE LEVEL

Results of the federal deputies election

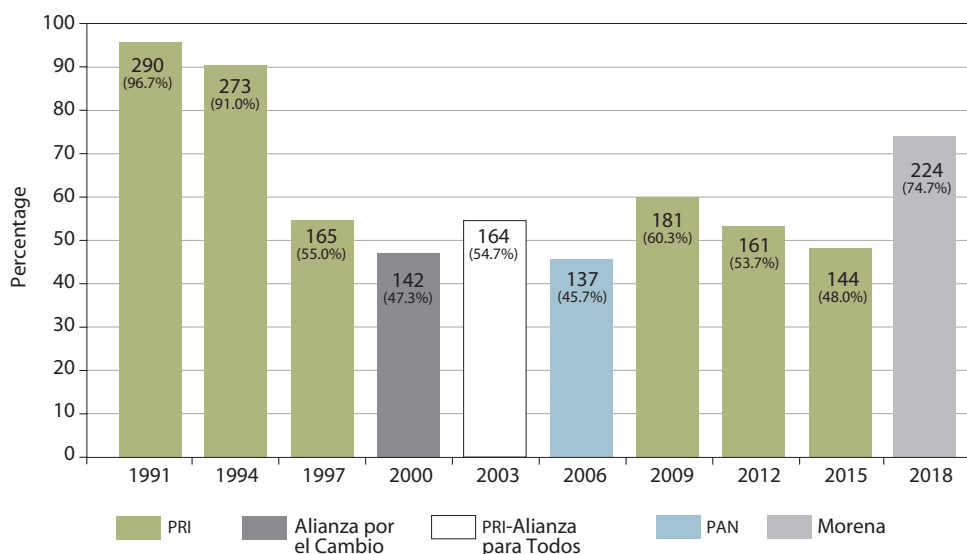
The coattail effect of the presidential election in the legislative one was evident. Driven by the performance of López Obrador in the presidential election, the Morena candidates in single-member federal districts obtained equally outstanding results.⁸ Altogether, almost 20.8 million citizens voted for Morena in the federal deputies' election (plurality vote tier), which is equivalent to 37.2 per cent of the total of casted votes. Although this percentage is 16 per cent lower than what AMLO obtained (53.2%), the votes for Morena in the federal deputy's election (plurality vote tier) are more than the ones obtained by the PAN and the PRI combined (19.3 million). To put this fact in historical perspective, the 2018 federal deputies' election is the first since 1994 in which the dominant party gets more votes than the second and third together.

Morena won in the vast majority of districts

Morena, the Labor Party (Spanish: Partido del Trabajo, PT) and the Social Encounter Party (Spanish: Partido Encuentro Social, PES) jointly won 220 single-member federal legislative in the 2018 elections. Although this, in itself, is a significant result, it hides an even higher figure. If the votes of each political party are considered separately, Morena won more votes than any other political force in 224 of the country's 300 districts (74.7%) (Figure 5). These results reveal the magnitude of trans-

⁸ This article focuses on the analysis of the results of the election of federal deputies elected by plurality vote. Due to the nature of the Mexican electoral system, it is highly feasible that these results are very similar to the results of the election of deputies elected by proportional representation.

FIGURE 5. Number of congressional districts in which the main party or coalition obtained the highest number of votes, 1991-2018



Source: Own elaboration based on official data.

formation that the 2018 elections generated at the parties’ level of territorial presence and in the dynamics of competition in the party system. The level of voter support for the new political group translated into a “tsunami” both in the integration of the two federal legislative institutions and in the displacement of the parties that have dominated the political contest in the Mexican political system.

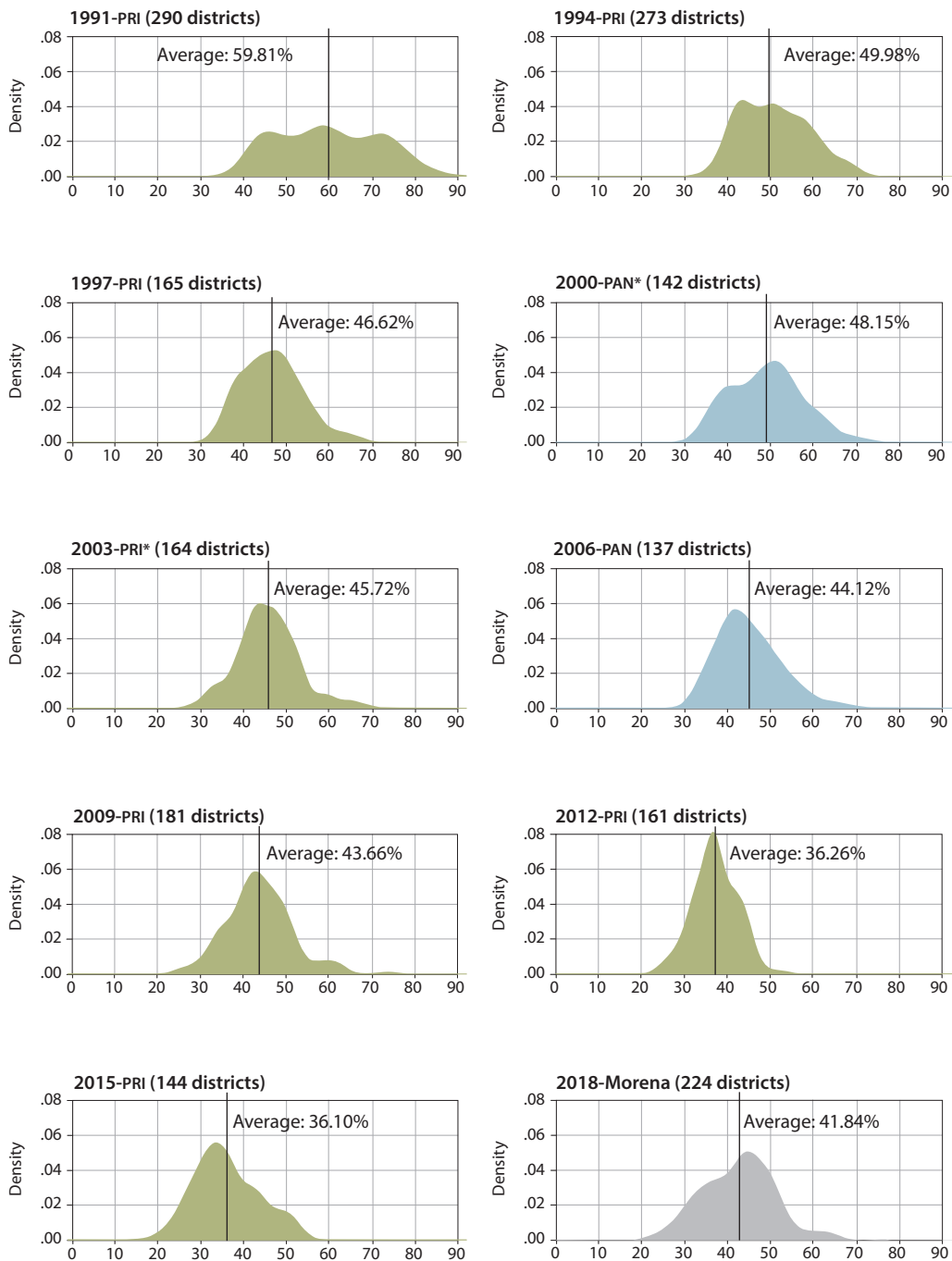
No party or coalition had managed to become the first electoral force in such a high number of districts since 1994, when the PRI won in 273 of the 300 districts (91%). The closest historical reference is the 2009 midterm election, but even on that occasion, the PRI obtained the highest number of votes in 43 districts less than Morena in 2018 (181 vs. 224). At the same time, one of the most significant effects of this election was precisely the magnitude of the PRI’s electoral defeat throughout the country.

Morena won with wide Margins

Just like López Obrador —and in large part precisely because of his leadership—, Morena obtained a high percentage of votes in the 224 districts where it was the first electoral force (Figure 6). On average, Morena won over 220 districts with 41.8 per cent of the votes, and its average advantage over the second electoral force was 21.4 per cent.

Even though the average percentage of the vote obtained by Morena in the districts it won in 2018 is the third “smallest” in the last ten federal deputies’ elections,

FIGURE 6. Percentage of votes obtained by the party that won the most congressional districts, 1991-2018



Source: Own elaboration based on official data. *In these elections we consider electoral districts won by PAN and PRI, respectively, in coalition with PVEM. See footnote 10.

it is important to remember two elements. First, in 2018 Morena obtained the highest percentage of votes in 224 districts, the largest number since 1994. Second, Morena won these districts with the biggest average margin obtained by a political party in the last eight legislative elections. The most similar historical benchmark was again the 1994 election when the PRI's average percentage advantage over second place was 22.7 per cent.

The fragmentation of the party system increased in the election ... and then it decreased

The number of parties competing in a system can be measured with the “effective number of parties” index (ENP).⁹ It offers an intuitive and direct measure of the strength of the parties and how many seats they have. Figure 7 offers two ENP metrics for the 1991-2018 period: the first based on the proportion of votes obtained by each party or coalition in ten elections of the period¹⁰ and the second based on the proportion of seats obtained by each party at the beginning of each of the lower chamber's legislatures.¹¹

The gray line in the graph shows the electoral ENP's sustained growth between 1991 and 2015, a period where it went from 2.38 to 5.56. However, in the 2018 election (consistent with the results presented), this number was reduced to 4.35, a slightly higher value than in 2012. The blue line illustrates that between 1991 and the first measurement of 2018, the legislative ENP grew almost continuously, going from 2.2 to 4.69 in the 27 years analyzed. Unlike the electoral ENP, the graph includes four measurements of the legislative ENP in 2018 because, in a process that was completely atypical for Mexico (and probably for any other democratic coun-

⁹ The formula to calculate the Effective Number of Matches proposed by Laakso and Taagepera (1979) is as follows:

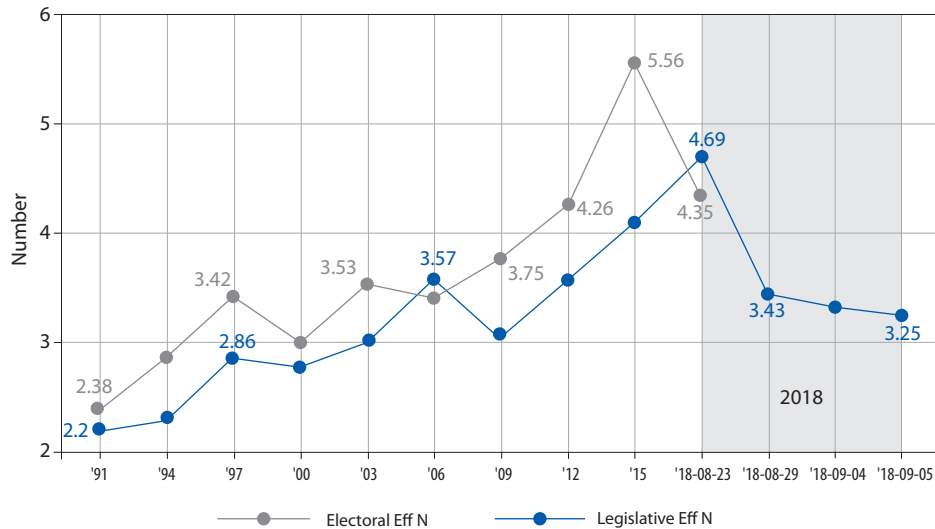
$$NEP = 1 / \sum p_i^2$$

where p_i is the percentage of votes or seats of each party.

¹⁰ During the period 1991-2006, the Mexican electoral law established that the votes cast in favor of a coalition had to be registered in favor of the entire coalition. Subsequently, the votes were divided among the political parties based on the percentages predefined in their coalition agreements. Since the 2007-2008 electoral reform, votes can only be cast and counted in favor of political parties. If there is a coalition, the votes obtained by the parties that comprise it are added in the next stage. For this reason, while the ENP for the period 2009-2018 was calculated based on the number of votes for each political party, the previous figures were calculated considering the number of votes obtained by each party and/or coalition. In 2003 the PRI competed independently in the districts of 21 states and in coalition with the PVEM in the districts of the remaining 11 entities. Given that the PRI was by far the leading political force in the coalition, in calculating this year's electoral ENP we consider the votes of the PRI and its coalition with the PVEM as those of a single political force. The code with which the calculations were made includes more details.

¹¹ In this investigation, we use the data of the Lower Chamber because they offer more frequent measurements (13) than those of the Senate (7) for the same period. When calculating the ENP, the total number of seats obtained by each political party represented in the Chamber of Deputies was considered, regardless of whether they were elected by a plurality voting or proportional representation.

FIGURE 7. Electoral and legislative effective number of parties, 1991-2018*



Source: Own elaboration based on official data. *For the legislative (*EffN*), the figure includes four measures for 2018 due to changes in size of some of the parliamentary groups between August 23rd (when the electoral authority assigned proportional representation congressional members) and September 5th of that year.

try), it was reduced by more than 30 per cent in less than 15 days and —more importantly— without any election at all.¹²

In August 2018, the electoral authority allocated the final number of federal deputies by party. At that moment, the legislative ENP was at its highest point in Mexico’s recent history (with 4.69), which represented both the continuity of the trend in previous elections and the consolidation of the pluralism that has been built up in recent decades. The situation changed radically just six days later (August 29). When the time came to formally integrate the parliamentary groups, just before the inaugural session of the LXIV legislature of the Chamber of Deputies, 25 and 32 deputies elected under the emblems of the PES and the PT, respectively, resigned from those parties and joined Morena’s parliamentary group. These legislator migrations reduced 26.9 per cent of the legislative ENP in this second moment (it went from 4.69 to 3.43 per cent).

The legislative ENP continued to drop in the following days due to the addition of five deputies from the PVEM (04/09/2018) and four more deputies from the PT (09/05/2018) to the Morena parliamentary group. This atypical process suggests that the presence of “grasshopper politicians” (“*políticos chapulín*”) and the use of “taxi parties” were part of a strategy to maximize electoral results by avoiding the

¹² The first measurement of the legislative ENP for 2018 corresponds to the moment in which the INE assigned the proportional representation seats (August 23).

legislative overrepresentation penalty that this majority coalition would have entailed. The last included value of the legislative ENP in Figure 7 (3.25) is the lowest one recorded since 2012, which accounts for the re-concentration of political forces around Morena after the election. It also reveals a very successful candidacy selection strategy in which members or candidates close to Morena used other parties to win their seats.

The nationalization of the vote

The nationalization of electoral support for parties has been extensively studied in comparative politics, and various measures have been developed which can determine the territorial distribution of support. Since parties do not receive the same level of support from all districts, reviewing the origin of the vote allows a better understanding of the political strategies that parties can develop. This research uses the nationalization index created by Jones and Mainwaring (2003),¹³ with data from the federal deputies' election by plurality voting, and aggregated at the district level for the 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2018 elections.¹⁴

The results presented in Figure 8 show that, in 2018, Morena became the most nationalized party, based on the territorial distribution of support. Morena's nationalization increased between 2015 and 2018, going from 0.61 to 0.79, respectively; this represents an expansion of approximately 30 per cent. It also implies that, unlike previous elections, the PRI was not the most nationalized party (0.77).

Adding to the results presented in other studies (such as that of Jones and Mainwaring, 2003), the level of nationalization of the four Mexican parties is higher in elections that are held simultaneously, in which both president and federal deputies are elected at the same time (2012 and 2018) than those elections carried out separately. This data is consistent with the assumption that presidential elections have a carryover effect on legislative elections (multilevel effect).

Mexican citizens changed (for the most part) their vote

The change in electoral preferences is measured with an indicator of whether citizens vote for the same party or change their preferences between elections. Volatility can be measured at the individual level (with voter surveys) or at the aggregate level (with the electoral results that parties obtain in two—or more—given elections). Although there are various formulas to calculate it, this research uses Pedersen's formula (1983).¹⁵ Various papers have used it to describe the degree of the stability of

¹³ Jones and Mainwaring (2003: 142) use the Gini coefficient in an inverse way to measure nationalization. We inverted the coefficient (1-Gini), so the higher the score, the better the spatial distribution of the vote. The index should be read from 0 to 1.

¹⁴ No data from previous elections is used for the reasons mentioned in footnote 10.

¹⁵ Aggregate electoral volatility (AEV) can be calculated from the Pedersen index (1983):

FIGURE 8. Nationalization level for each of the main political parties at the federal level, 2009-2018*



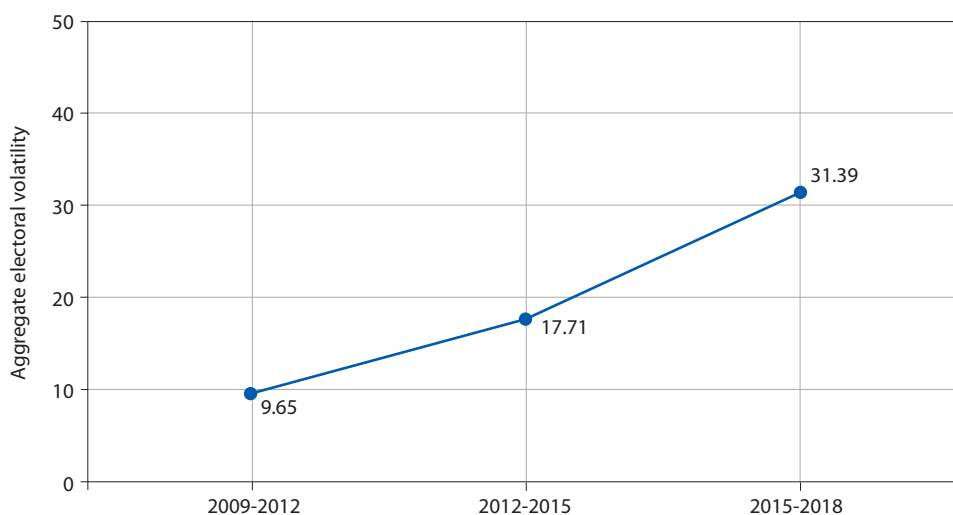
Source: Own elaboration based on official data. *Calculated as 1-Gini coefficient.

voters’ support to the party system and, along with other criteria, they have created the idea that volatility is linked to the institutionalization of the party system and democratic governance (Torcal, 2015; Mainwaring and Torcal, 2005; Mainwaring and Scully, 1995). In this sense, a high level of electoral volatility can reveal the presence of “critical elections” with intense electoral realignments (Key, 1955) as well as representation problems between politicians and voters (Torcal, 2015).

Figure 9 shows that in the case of the federal deputies’ elections held between 2009 and 2018, the aggregate electoral volatility almost doubled from one election to the next, going from 9.65 in the 2009-2012 period to 31.39 in the 2015-2018 period. This result is very interesting given that Mexico went from having similar levels

$$VEA = (\sum |\Delta p_i|) / 2$$

where $|\Delta p_i|$ represents the absolute change in the percentage of votes obtained by party i between two successive elections. The total of the absolute value sum of the differences is divided by 2 to take into account the fact that one party loses it while another wins it. The value of AEV ranges from 0 to 100 and it is often said that the higher it is, the more unstable a party system is.

FIGURE 9. Aggregate electoral volatility at the federal legislative elections, 2009-2018

Source: Own elaboration based on official data.

of electoral volatility as countries like Honduras,¹⁶ towards the group of party systems with medium volatility such as Nicaragua or Bolivia in a similar period (Freidenberg, 2016). These changes at the demand level of the system are precisely what has generated the transformation in the legislative force of partisan supply.

CONCLUSIONS: MORENA AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE PARTY SYSTEM

With the same rules of the game under which competition had taken place in previous elections, the result of the 2018 election revealed the massive reorientation of the electorate, generating a “tsunami” in the power distribution of the Mexican political system. These changes in the electorate were reflected in the configuration of forces within the party system. As in other Latin American party systems during the 1990s and 2000s, where the parties lost their support, and their party systems collapsed,¹⁷ with this election Mexico experienced a dramatic transformation in the electoral support that traditional parties had historically obtained, that is, the parties that had competed in the system since the process of political liberaliza-


¹⁶ Among its political parties, between 1981 and 2005, Honduras experienced just 7 percentage points of aggregate electoral volatility at the legislative level, while Nicaragua had 29.7 (1984-2001) and Bolivia about 30.42 percentage points (1985-2005) (Alcántara and Freidenberg, 2006).

¹⁷ “Party system collapse” is understood as the moment in which a party loses at least 50 per cent of its votes from one election to another (Dietz and Myers, 2007). Various studies have shown how party systems have collapsed in Latin America, see the chapters in Freidenberg (2016), and Freidenberg and Suárez Cao (2014).

tion.¹⁸ This election revealed a shift in electoral support from the parties that always competed and won to a recently created political force.

This election has revealed transformations in the structure and dynamics of competition in the Mexican party system at the federal level. This research presents data that shows the meaning of these changes in each of the key dimensions of analysis. Regarding the structure of the competition, the changes altered the orientation of the vote (strengthening one party: Morena), giving the Executive the support of the majority in Congress, who also won in all geographic units—voting booths, precincts, districts, states. The transformations in structural elements of competition are also evident in the reduction of the party supply fragmentation (with a decrease in the ENP) and an increase in the level of Morena’s nationalization.

Structural changes are also reflected in the dynamics of competition, that is, in party interactions. The reorientation of citizen support towards Morena has transformed the cooperation dynamics among the Executive-Legislative, generating the first unified government since 1994 and returning to the old unified or “party government” dynamic in which the president has enough support due to the majority he/she has in both chambers to turn his/her public policy proposals into law. Notably, one of the critical elements of this election has been the carryover effect of the presidential election on the legislative one. This dynamic led to the creation of a unified government, with disciplined legislative majorities under the ruling party, thus facilitating the process of law-making.

Although the change has been substantial from 2012 to 2018, the fact that it is only one election limits the possibility of identifying these elections as critical. To be able to establish if this change lasts, it is necessary to wait for the next presidential elections. The evaluation of an upcoming presidential election, compared to 2018, will enable the depth and timing of this change to be established. 

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¹⁸ A discussion on the definition of traditional parties can be found in Freidenberg y Suárez Cao (2014).

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ANNEX

TABLE 1A. Electoral calendar

	Presidency	Federal deputies	Federal senators
1994	August 21	August 21	August 21
2000	July 2	July 2	July 2
2006	July 2	July 2	July 2
2012	July 1	July 1	July 1
2018	July 1	July 1	July 1

Source: Own elaboration with official data.

Did Religious Voters Turn to AMLO in 2018?

An Empirical Analysis

Alejandro Díaz Domínguez*

ABSTRACT: Morena, a new left-wing party which supports income redistribution, and at the same time, appeals to values in a generic sense, has attracted many religious voters. Drawing from the literature on religion and politics in Latin America, and analyzing the 2018 CNEP surveys conducted in Mexico, available evidence suggests that observant and traditionalist Catholics were more likely to support AMLO, whereas Protestants and Evangelicals were less likely to vote for him, arguably due to the vague stance that Morena has taken regarding moral values. Thus, the broader coalition that cemented AMLO's victory seems to be composed of secularists, who still favor the left, and observant Catholics.

KEYWORDS: Catholic, religion, Morena, left, Mexico.

¿Votó la ciudadanía religiosa por AMLO en 2018?: Un análisis empírico

RESUMEN: Morena, un nuevo partido de izquierda que apoya la redistribución del ingreso y, al mismo tiempo, apela a valores morales en un sentido genérico, ha atraído a muchos votantes religiosos. A partir de la literatura sobre religión y política en América Latina y con datos de la encuesta de la Confederación Nacional de Escuelas Particulares (CNEP, por sus siglas en inglés) de 2018 realizada en México, este trabajo muestra que los católicos observantes y tradicionalistas votaron por AMLO con mayor probabilidad que la ciudadanía sin adscripción religiosa, mientras que los protestantes y evangélicos votaron por él con menor probabilidad, posiblemente debido a la vaga postura que Morena ha adoptado respecto a valores morales. Así, la amplia coalición que cimentó la victoria de AMLO parece estar compuesta por secularistas, que aún favorecen a la izquierda, y católicos observantes.

PALABRAS CLAVE: catolicismo, religión, Morena, izquierda, México.

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Left-wing candidates rarely attract religious vote because they push for liberal moral values that are usually inimical for religious citizens. Despite this, the 2018 election showed a striking convergence between the left-wing candidate, AMLO, and Catholic religious citizens. How can we account for this convergence? Are religious voters driven by candidates' religious discourse in a generic sense, beyond the divide among Catholics, Protestants, and Evangelicals?

In order to offer valuable insights to these questions, scholars have explored the role that religion plays on Mexico's party system. It is true that Mexican politics was largely dominated for a single party at the national level, but nowadays, the country faces debates on religiosity and moral issues that could trigger a religious vote among different political options. Mexico could be considered as a religious country, in which eight out of ten are Catholics (INEGI, 2010), with one third of Catholics and 60 per cent of Protestants and Evangelicals attending church services every week (CNEP, 2018), and only 10 per cent not belonging to any church.

On Mexico's religious cleavages, the usual milestones are the 19th century Church-State disputes, and the *Cristero* rebellion of 1926 (Meyer, 1979). In partisan politics, during the last thirty years, religion has been analyzed through political parties' supporters. For example, the National Action Party (PAN)'s profile usually includes its Catholic baggage, formal ties to the international Christian Democrat movement, and a strong opposition to deregulation of abortion, and State sanctioned same sex marriage (Mabry, 1973; Magaloni and Moreno, 2003).

Regarding the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), analysts have highlighted its religious traditionalism, its recognition of legal status to churches (Lamadrid, 1994; Gill, 1999), and its continuous political appeals to Catholic bishops prompted by Cárdenas in the 1930s (Muro González, 1994), Salinas in the 1990s (Monsiváis, 1992), and Peña Nieto in the 2010s (Barranco, 2018), as well as some connections with some specific Evangelical churches (De la Torre, 1996; Barracca and Howell, 2014; Garma, 2019).

In contrast, the Democratic Revolution Party (PRD) at the national level heralded liberal policies such as clergy voting rights, gay marriage and deregulation of abortion (Monsiváis, 1992; Magaloni and Moreno, 2003; Camp, 2008). There are reasons to believe that this party position is also spread across Mexico, as revealed by the positive impact of state governors affiliated with the PRD on state level recognition of same sex relationship rights (Beer and Cruz-Aceves, 2018: 19).

This party system, in place for more than two decades, has come to an end with the strong emergence of Morena (originally Movimiento Regeneración Nacional or National Regeneration Movement, a new political party that received official registry on July of 2014), which has championed support for the poor, promised to fight corruption, cut bureaucratic privileges and useless spending to reallocate resources on social welfare programs. At the same time, Morena sent an ambivalent and

vague policy message towards abortion and gay rights. As I suggest in this research note, this strategy, deliberated or unconscious, seems to have succeeded at attracting religious voters (Díaz Domínguez, 2019).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In some democracies, party competition is usually studied through the structural bases of parties' support, such as political divisions or cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967, 1990), in which religious conflicts between Catholic and Protestant electorates, and between confessional and secular ones, could translate into the party system, such as it has been took place in several Latin America countries (Hagopian, 2009; Freston, 2009; Boas and Smith, 2015; Lindhardt and Thorsen, 2015; Ruiz, 2015; Althoff, 2019).

In Latin America, on the one and, religion has influenced electoral competition when moral issues have become controversial, such as divorce during the 1990s in Chile (Lies and Malone, 2006), same sex marriage across Latin American countries during the 2000s (Lodola and Corral, 2013: 44-45), and moral traditionalism in Brazil (Smith, 2019). On the other hand, Catholic communities aligned with liberation theology's doctrine do encourage political participation, and even root for leftist parties (Parker, 2016; Díaz Domínguez, 2013). Nevertheless, traditional distinctions between the political effects of the Catholic liberation theology and the Pentecostal prosperity gospel in Latin America are challenged because of Mexican and Brazilian Pentecostal sympathies toward a liberationist agenda, which is mainly based on social justice demands (Chaves, 2015; Garma, 2019).

In transitional states, Protestant churches could exercise a more positive impact on democratic development, and civil society pluralism. This is arguably due to the mainline Protestant ethos, which distinguishes between public and private spheres (Tusalem, 2009; Woodberry, 2012). Historically, mainline Protestantism and its theological traditions, such as the social gospel, were more favorable to participation in public affairs than Pentecostalism, which preaches a pre-millennial theology and strict separation of the spiritual realm and worldly affairs (Althoff, 2019). Neo-Pentecostalism and post-millennial theology however have challenged this position, as Neo-Pentecostal churches are thrusting themselves enthusiastically into politics. Thus, there are reasons to believe that some non-Catholic churches could be interested in political affairs and elections (Telles *et al.*, 2014; Smith, 2019; Sarmet and Belchior, 2016).

Political activism of Pentecostals in Chile and Brazil (Lindhardt and Thorsen, 2015) and in Guatemala and Brazil (Freston, 2009) suggest that specific Evangelical churches are exercising a greater political impact today. For instance, politics and religion played an important role in the 2014 Brazil's presidential elections, in which Catholic bishops preached against Dilma Rousseff, whereas the Universal

Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG) endorsed her (Smith, 2019). However, there were subtler differences when analyzing legislative elections. For example, Brazilian Pentecostals were more likely to vote for Pentecostal candidates when compared to Evangelicals for their own candidates, and these differences disappeared between Pentecostals and members of the UCKG regarding support for their own candidates (Lacerda, 2018).

Although Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals may differ in when Christ will return on earth, translating into pre and post-millennialism, in practice some Pentecostal churches in Guatemala and Mexico are teaching a post-millennialist doctrine, increasing the likelihood to engage in politics (Althoff, 2019; Garma, 2019). Thus, there is a sort of revival on the political impact of religions in Latin America. In this way, predictions of modernization theorists that anticipated the fading of religion in politics have not fully explained why religious divisions are still relevant in politics (Norris and Inglehart, 2004; Buckley, 2016).

Nevertheless, the impact of religion on politics requires a cautionary note. Religious commitment mainly relates to moral and cultural issues, such as abortion and gay rights across religious affiliations. Regarding social welfare, tax policies or international affairs however, the link between religion and politics is weaker or hard to establish (Campbell, Layman and Green, 2016: 235). These findings remind us that the effects of religion may be limited to specific policy domains.

In Mexico, Catholics have supported the three main political parties: the PAN, due to its conservatism and fight for democracy (Klesner, 1987, Magaloni and Moreno, 2003; Chand, 2001; Moreno, 2009: 279); the PRI, when looking for a strong leader (Magaloni and Moreno, 2003; Hagopian, 2009); and the PRD, for its social welfare policies at the local level (Muro González, 1994).

Regarding Protestants and Evangelicals in Mexico, although some denominations remain politically aloof, such as Latter-Day Saints, and Jehovah Witnesses (Fortuny, 1996), several case studies suggest that some Evangelical affiliations (such as the Light of the World Church) supported the PRI (De la Torre, 1996: 160; Monsiváis, 1992: 166-167). One of the reasons is that religious minorities are less likely to support the PAN, as long as they associate this party with the Catholic church. Thus, in order to preserve the secular State, they prefer to vote for the PRI (Barracca and Howell, 2014: 24). In contrast, other case studies suggest that religious Protestants and Evangelicals supported the PRD in places in which the government was not paying attention to economic inequalities and poverty (Fortuny, 1996).

There are two arguments that explain why a plurality of Evangelicals would prefer the PRI. To begin with, because of its history of Evangelical persecution, they prefer a party which offers some official protection, and that's why they celebrate President Juárez day, who championed Church-State separation in Mexico (Garma, 2019: 39). Secondly, the PRI has maintained a conservative position on social issues,

which tunes in well to Evangelicals, who are more socially conservative than the general population (Barracca and Howell, 2014: 34, 41). One exemption though is the House of the Rock, a neo-Pentecostal church with ties to the PAN in Mexico City (Garma, 2019).

In relation to religious dimensions, such as attendance to religious services, data from the Comparative Study on Electoral Systems (CSES) reported that in 37 presidential and parliamentary elections in 32 countries during the 1990s, “almost three-quarters of the most devout (defined as those who reported attending religious services at least once per week) voted for parties of the right. By contrast, among the least religious, those who never attended religious services, less than half (45 %) voted for the right” (Norris and Inglehart, 2004: 201).

This comparative evidence seems to fit into the Mexican case. During the mid-1980s, PAN’s electorate were more religious (Camp, 1997: 56), and during the 2000, and 2006 presidential elections, the PAN did very well within those who gave more importance to religion and attended more to church (Moreno, 2009: 284). This support however did not translate into a religiously oriented right-wing party, because the PAN built a broader coalition to defeat the PRI (Magaloni and Moreno, 2003). In fact, religious citizens were more likely to vote and believe in political change (Moreno and Mendizábal, 2015: 313).

Regarding the PRI, church attendance increased vote choice during the 1988 presidential, and the 1991 midterm elections (Domínguez and McCann, 1996: 104, 138). Church attendance also reinforced support for the PRI during the 1994 presidential elections, and the 1997 midterm elections, particularly among citizens with low levels of political awareness (Moreno, 1999: 141).

In 2012, Catholics preferred PRI’s candidate, Enrique Peña Nieto, when compared to the PRD’s candidate, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (popularly known as AMLO) (Díaz Domínguez, 2014: 51). The effect of religiosity in the 2012 presidential elections was also negative for the PRD’s candidate, elections in which the PRI received a great deal of support among weekly church goers (Díaz Domínguez, 2014: 55; Torcal, 2014: 115). Finally, in 2015, there is evidence through spatial analysis that more Catholics in the district were negatively correlated with vote for Morena (Charles-Leija, Torres and Colima, 2018: 131).

All these academic studies and empirical evidence suggest that in general, religious voters prefer conservative political parties, whereas secular voters prefer liberal options (Norris and Inglehart, 2004; Hagopian, 2009). The question here is whether religious voters could be eventually attracted by a liberal political option. The preliminary answer depends on whether a liberal/leftist candidate can successfully attract religious voters when embracing a sort of religious discourse.

Preliminary survey evidence suggests that this could be the case for the last Mexico’s elections. The polling firm ARCOP in June of 2018 found that Catholics and

Evangelicals preferred AMLO when compared to PRI's candidate, José Antonio Meade, who was mainly preferred by respondents who did not belong to any church, also called "secularists" (for a theoretical characterization see Thiessen and Wilkins-Laflamme, 2017). Berumen-IPSOS surveys in May of 2018 showed Evangelical support for Morena's candidate, and Catholic support for the PRI's candidate. Finally, the 2018 CNEP post-electoral surveys showed large Catholic support for López Obrador, but this pattern did not hold for Evangelicals.

All these pieces of preliminary evidence suggest a noteworthy change: religious factors played a different role in Mexico's 2018 presidential elections. Preliminary evidence suggests a positive impact of religiosity among Catholics on support for Morena (Díaz Domínguez, 2019). In twelve years, López Obrador went from receiving secularists' support in 2006 as a candidate for the PRD (Camp, 2008) to attract Catholic religious voters in 2018, when running for Morena. Catholic Church attendance, this time, definitively increased popular support for AMLO. This is a noticeable change that deserves additional theoretical elaboration and further empirical verification.

There are three main factors that could explain why religious voters decided to support a leftist presidential candidate: *a*) previous experiences at the local level suggested a sort of association between religious variables and support for the left; *b*) preferences for political leaders who hold religious principles were channeled through the left; and *c*) a religious discourse in a generic sense that could attract religious voters. An alternate formulation could be left-wing candidates can attract religious voters if: *a*) they emphasize welfare issues that may be relevant for religious citizens (when they come from the poorer backgrounds); *b*) they downplay moral issues that may be divisive for conservative religious voters; and *c*) they highlight moral doctrines that may be closer to leftwing values.

The Mexican left has shown some ability to connect with the religious voters in the past, such as the Mexican Communist Party support for clergy's voting rights during the 1977 electoral reform (Monsiváis, 1992), and the campaign to encourage Catholics to vote for left-wing presidential candidates during the 1982 and 1988 elections (Camp, 1997).¹ Other sources of leftist popular support were linked to demands for social welfare programs, in line with the Catholic Social Doctrine. Some Mexican bishops during the 1980s and 1990s at the local level emphasized through public statements and pastoral letters a political agenda composed of social justice, participation, and free and fair elections (García, 1999; Soriano, 1999;

¹The 1992 constitutional reform adopted during Salinas administration (1988-1994) on Church-State relations undoubtedly changed the mechanics of the interrelationship between religion and politics. The only restriction which remains is the prohibition for churches and clergy to induce parishioners voting decisions (Lamadrid, 1994; Gill, 1999; Díaz Domínguez, 2006; Camp, 2008). Interestingly, at the time, 53 per cent of Catholic clergy believed that bishops should make greater efforts to promote Church's values against government's policies (Luengo, 1992: 227).

Chand, 2001; Trejo, 2009). These calls arguably induced sympathies for the left among Catholics (Hale, 2015).

Regarding preferences for political leaders who hold religious principles, most Mexicans separate religious beliefs from public values that are essential for leadership. Approximately, two-thirds prefer to maintain a secular regime, whereas one-third prefers leaders with religious principles (Camp, 2008). This segment of the electorate, who demands religious interventions in public life, has been analyzed considering different contexts. In countries in which citizens belonging to religious majorities do not attend church on frequent basis, leaders with religious principles are usually preferred, whereas countries in which individuals who belong to religious minorities are less likely to prefer such a type of leadership (Buckley, 2016).

In the 2018 presidential elections, Mexicans who demanded religious interventions in public life and regularly attend church seem to have supported López Obrador. This effect was arguably due to AMLO's strategy to get into the religious sensibilities of the people (Lee, 2018). He often spoke of faith and values, holding off on promoting same-sex marriage and decriminalizing abortion, typically avoiding explicit mentions, or just saying that these topics could be decided by referendum.

The idea of making continuous appeals to traditional and religious values was an attempt to soften a radical image after accusations from opponents in previous elections (Agreen, 2018). AMLO's continued religious references emphasize his interpretation of Christian love, which he equalizes to justice, and his previous campaign mottos: "Light of hope" in 2006, and "Republic of love" in 2012, they reveal a religious initial pattern (Garma, 2019: 43; Barranco, 2018).

Connecting all these three arguments, it seems plausible to argue that López Obrador, a popular candidate after two presidential campaigns (he got 35.31 per cent in 2006, and 31.6 per cent in 2012), was in search of additional points to reach the presidency. Thus, one reservoir of support was the religious vote, given that Mexico's religious voters are more likely to support political change (Moreno, 2003: 174).

To attract these voters, AMLO offered a message on abstract values. For instance, when López Obrador proposed a "moral constitution" at the beginning of the electoral campaign, 73 per cent supported this abstract idea: "Mexico does need a moral guidance, through something like a moral constitution", as reported by a survey published in the newspaper *El Financiero* (Moreno, 2018a).² Finally, López

² In addition to international press stories which profusely documented AMLO's religious appeals, such as stories published by *The Guardian* and *The New Yorker*, Mexico's national press also covered similar stories: during an interview aired in *Milenio TV* on March 22, 2018, Morena's candidate, in relation to abortion and same sex marriage stated: "my position is that these cases could be consulted, because I cannot offend those who.... I am the leader of a broad, plural, inclusive movement, where there are Catholics, there are Evangelicals, there are non-believers, I have to consult the opinion of all", suggesting a strategy to avoid being specific on controversial issues.

Obrador ran in alliance with the Social Encounter Party (PES), a party with ties to Evangelical churches.³

Although in Morena and its left-wing ally, PT's manifestos gender equity entailed affirmative action policies, the PES sought to protect life since conception, marriage between male and female only, and the creation of the National Minister of the Family. In addition, López Obrador just devoted one out of 209 public events to gender issues: social welfare for single young mothers who attended college in the state of Nuevo León (Morales and Palma, 2019: 51). In relation to abortion and same sex marriage, Morena's presidential candidate limited himself to repeat that "these are topics in which citizens have the last word" (Garma, 2019: 42). Even women in charge of different campaign issues within the party avoided abortion to not confront López Obrador (Morales and Palma, 2019: 52).

In addition to religious factors, it is important to mention other causes of the 2018 electoral results, such as critiques about PRI's performance in office (see other articles in this issue). Frequent scandals about corruption and human rights violations during Peña Nieto's administration fueled popular discontent (Mattiace, 2019: 286-287). Thus, AMLO's platform was committed to capture the disaffected voter: on the economic side, by promising income redistribution instead of more free market policies, and on the political side, by promising deliberation, peace, less corruption, and political change (Moreno, 2018b: 73; Mattiace, 2019: 295-297).

HYPOTHESES, DATA, AND METHODS

From the literature review, standard hypotheses emerge, such as citizens who frequently attend Church and hold the highest scores on traditional moral values will be more likely to vote for the PAN and the PRI; Catholics will be more likely to vote for the PAN and the PRI; Protestants and Evangelicals will be more likely to vote for the PRI; and citizens who prefer leaders with religious principles will be more likely to vote for the PAN.

Nevertheless, based on a revisited theory, there are reasons to believe that Catholic Church goes, and those who prefer leaders with religious principles will be more inclined to support Morena. These last assumptions however run against what standard theories suggests, due to the novel electoral effect of religious variables on support for the left in Mexico.

In this way, standard hypotheses need to be revised through the light of a previous revisited theory: testing whether AMLO's efforts to attract a portion of the religious vote were successful. In other words: Catholics who frequently attend Church

³There are additional examples of religious appeals, such as the implicit association between Morena and the light brown skin color of Our Lady of Guadalupe, or the specific day in which López Obrador received the official registry as presidential candidate at the Electoral Management Body (INE), December 12, same day in which is the festivity of the Virgin of Guadalupe (Barranco, 2018).

and hold the highest scores on traditional moral values are more likely to support Morena, due to religious appeals made by AMLO and his vague messages on abortion and gay rights.

Protestants and Evangelicals will be more likely to favor a wait-and-see strategy, due to competing factors: a) the alliance between PES (a party with Evangelical ties) and Morena would encourage support for AMLO, but b) vague AMLO's messages on moral values would rise concerns among Evangelicals, given their fierce opposition to abortion and gay rights. Thus, expectations about Protestants and Evangelicals are mixed. Finally, citizens who prefer leaders with religious principles will be more likely to vote for Morena, due to AMLO's religious appeals.

Thus, candidate's religious appeals in a generic sense could attract religious voters, but electoral success would depend on to what extent religious voters need to hear the specifics of policies, such as on moral values. Those who saw a radicalized AMLO in 2006 and 2012 may still have voted for Morena in 2018 as long as they had noticed a more non-committal candidate on these issues. On the contrary, those who saw a vague candidate on moral values in 2018, they may have gone for different political options.

Data for the analysis come from the 2018 CNEP post electoral survey, a face to face and nationally representative poll conducted between 12 and 22 of July, among 1 428 Mexican citizens in 84 primary sampling points. Margin of error was +/- 2.6 points, a 95 per cent confidence level, and refusal rate of 48 per cent. Descriptive statistics of the analyzed data are shown in Table 1.

Statistical analyses are based on multinomial logistic regressions, in which the dependent variable is a vote choice set comprised of José Antonio Meade (JAM), who ran for the coalition PRI-PVEM-NA; Ricardo Anaya Cortés (RAC), who ran for the coalition PAN-PRD-MC; other options (independent candidates, such as Jaime Rodríguez "el Bronco" or Margarita Zavala, who finally declined few weeks before the election day, or any other voting decision), and Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) who ran for the coalition Morena-PT-PES, who serves as a reference category.⁴

Main variables of interest are religious affiliations, such as dummy variables for Catholics, and Protestants/Evangelicals, in which no affiliation serves as reference category. Due to the reduced number of cases, Protestants and Evangelicals were grouped. There are three additional religious dimensions: *a*) Church attendance as a measure of religiosity, from almost never to weekly attendance; *b*) Support for

⁴ Additional regressions included structural equation models (see online appendix), in which vote for Morena was the dependent variable, and explanatory variables were demographics, party identification, vote choice in 2012, religious variables, feeling thermometers, and evaluations on issues. The last three groups were previously estimated considering their respective latent variables. Other two models (see online appendix) were binary logistic regressions, in which vote for Morena was the dependent variable, and a multinomial probit model in a Bayesian framework. Results were essentially consistent with the reported multinomial logistic regressions here (these additional models are available from the author).

TABLE 1. Descriptive statistics

Variable	Valid (%)	Mean	Standard deviations	Min.	Max.
Female	100.00	0.51	0.50	0	1
AMLO 12	100.00	0.18	0.39	0	1
AMLO 18	100.00	0.49	0.50	0	1
EPN 12	100.00	0.24	0.43	0	1
JAM 18	100.00	0.09	0.29	0	1
JVM 12	100.00	0.14	0.34	0	1
RAC 18	100.00	0.12	0.33	0	1
Catholic	100.00	0.82	0.38	0	1
Protestant -Evangelical	100.00	0.08	0.27	0	1
Secularist	100.00	0.09	0.29	0	1
Church attendance	99.37	3.34	1.50	1	5
Religious leader	98.04	2.21	1.21	1	5
Moral values	96.04	11.19	3.33	1	16
Abortion*	96.64	2.91	0.97	1	4
Gay adoption*	96.85	2.97	1.01	1	4
Gay marriage*	96.15	2.61	1.05	1	4
Marijuana *	98.11	3.01	0.97	1	4
Married	100.00	0.62	0.49	0	1
Age	100.00	3.60	1.67	1	6
Education	99.86	4.84	1.95	1	9
Income	90.20	2.88	1.92	1	9
Interest in politics	99.86	2.28	0.95	1	4
North	100.00	0.26	0.44	0	1
West	100.00	0.20	0.40	0	1
South	100.00	0.21	0.41	0	1
TV News	100.00	3.82	1.48	1	5
Urban	100.00	2.52	0.76	1	3
PID Morena	100.00	0.21	0.41	0	1
PID PAN	100.00	0.06	0.24	0	1
PID PRI	100.00	0.09	0.28	0	1
Ideology	78.36	5.22	2.82	1	10

Source: 2018 CNEP Mexico' sample. *Part of the Moral Values additive index (alpha = 0.81). Data not available (%): abortion (3.36); church attendance (0.63); education (0.14); gay adoption (3.15); gay marriage (3.85); income (9.8); ideology (21.64); marijuana (1.89); and prefers leader with religious inclinations (1.96).

leaders with religious principles as a measure of religion intervention on public domain (B.ReligRule), from strongly disagreement to strongly agreement; and *c*) a moral values additive index, comprised of abortion, gay marriage, gay adoption, and marijuana ($\alpha=0.81$), as a measure of traditionalism, which ranges from total support to total rejection.

A set of covariates serves as control variables: female, age, income, education, urban, civil status (a dummy variable for married), TV news consumption, regional dummy variables, such as North, South, and West, in which the Central region serves as reference category, ideology, measured as self-placement on the left-right continuum, vote choice in 2012 as dummy variables for the PAN (Josefina Vázquez Mota-JVM), the PRI (Enrique Peña Nieto-EPN), and the PRD (AMLO), interest in politics, and finally, dummy variables for party identification with the PAN, the PRI, and Morena (Moreno, 2018b; Morales, 2016).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tables 2 and 3 report six models. Table 2 shows base models, and Table 3 includes interactive models. In Table 2, there are four base models, which show the effects of religious factors in a separate way. The first model shows all the control variables plus religious affiliations, that is, Catholics and Protestants/Evangelicals. The second model shows all the model 1 variables plus Church attendance; the third one shows model 1 plus moral values, and the last one shows model 1 plus leaders with religious principles. Thus, models 2, 3, and 4 essentially are trying to test the isolated effects of attendance, moral values, and leaders with religious principles on vote choice, keeping all control variables and religious affiliations into the equation.

TABLE 2. Determinants of voting in Mexico's presidential elections, 2018 (base models)

Variable	(1)			(2)			(3)			(4)		
	JAM	Others	RAC	JAM	Others	RAC	JAM	Others	RAC	JAM	Others	RAC
Female	0.45 (0.29)	-0.14 (0.17)	0.05 (0.26)	0.49* (0.30)	-0.09 (0.18)	0.05 (0.26)	0.41 (0.29)	-0.15 (0.17)	0.05 (0.26)	0.45 (0.29)	-0.14 (0.17)	0.02 (0.26)
AMLO 12	-2.32** (0.80)	-1.68** (0.28)	-1.76** (0.56)	-2.41** (0.81)	-1.76** (0.28)	-1.78** (0.56)	-2.28** (0.80)	-1.71** (0.28)	-1.77** (0.56)	-2.31** (0.80)	-1.70** (0.28)	-1.85** (0.56)
JVM 12	-0.09 (0.51)	-0.39 (0.28)	1.13** (0.34)	-0.11 (0.52)	-0.41 (0.28)	1.14** (0.34)	-0.08 (0.52)	-0.39 (0.28)	1.13** (0.34)	-0.06 (0.52)	-0.40 (0.28)	1.06** (0.34)
EPN 12	0.60* (0.35)	-1.02** (0.24)	-0.38 (0.36)	0.65* (0.35)	-1.02** (0.24)	-0.38 (0.36)	0.61* (0.35)	-1.05** (0.24)	-0.41 (0.36)	0.58* (0.35)	-1.05** (0.24)	-0.42 (0.36)
Married	-0.52* (0.30)	-0.40** (0.18)	-0.28 (0.27)	-0.52* (0.30)	-0.37** (0.18)	-0.29 (0.27)	-0.48 (0.30)	-0.38** (0.18)	-0.28 (0.27)	-0.52* (0.30)	-0.40** (0.18)	-0.26 (0.28)
PID PRI	2.99** (0.40)	0.66* (0.39)	0.63 (0.51)	3.03** (0.41)	0.70* (0.40)	0.65 (0.51)	3.03** (0.41)	0.69* (0.40)	0.59 (0.51)	3.00** (0.41)	0.69* (0.40)	0.49 (0.54)

TABLE 2. Determinantes del voto en las elecciones presidenciales de México, 2018 (modelos base) (continuation)

Variable	(1)			(2)			(3)			(4)		
	JAM	Others	RAC	JAM	Others	RAC	JAM	Others	RAC	JAM	Others	RAC
PID PAN	0.73 (1.17)	1.31** (0.66)	3.67** (0.60)	0.68 (1.18)	1.32** (0.66)	3.67** (0.60)	0.76 (1.17)	1.32** (0.66)	3.68** (0.60)	0.78 (1.17)	1.35** (0.66)	3.67** (0.60)
PID Morena	-1.71** (0.62)	-1.28** (0.23)	-2.75** (0.73)	-1.74** (0.62)	-1.31** (0.24)	-2.76** (0.73)	-1.69** (0.62)	-1.25** (0.23)	-2.75** (0.73)	-1.70** (0.62)	-1.26** (0.23)	-2.75** (0.73)
Ideology	0.16** (0.06)	0.06* (0.03)	0.15** (0.05)	0.15** (0.06)	0.06 (0.03)	0.15** (0.05)	0.16** (0.06)	0.06* (0.03)	0.15** (0.05)	0.15** (0.06)	0.06* (0.03)	0.16** (0.05)
Education	-0.05 (0.09)	-0.08 (0.06)	0.00 (0.08)	-0.04 (0.09)	-0.06 (0.06)	0.01 (0.08)	-0.05 (0.09)	-0.08 (0.06)	0.00 (0.08)	-0.07 (0.09)	-0.10* (0.06)	-0.03 (0.09)
Income	-0.00 (0.08)	0.00 (0.05)	-0.10 (0.08)	-0.00 (0.08)	0.00 (0.05)	-0.10 (0.08)	-0.01 (0.08)	-0.00 (0.05)	-0.09 (0.08)	-0.00 (0.08)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.11 (0.08)
Urban	-0.03 (0.20)	-0.06 (0.12)	-0.14 (0.17)	-0.04 (0.21)	-0.06 (0.12)	-0.13 (0.17)	-0.05 (0.21)	-0.05 (0.12)	-0.13 (0.17)	-0.02 (0.20)	-0.05 (0.12)	-0.15 (0.17)
Age	-0.07 (0.11)	-0.07 (0.06)	-0.07 (0.09)	-0.03 (0.11)	-0.04 (0.06)	-0.07 (0.09)	-0.06 (0.11)	-0.08 (0.07)	-0.11 (0.10)	-0.08 (0.11)	-0.07 (0.06)	-0.06 (0.09)
North	-0.38 (0.38)	0.12 (0.23)	0.25 (0.33)	-0.39 (0.39)	0.14 (0.23)	0.24 (0.34)	-0.39 (0.39)	0.15 (0.23)	0.29 (0.34)	-0.38 (0.38)	0.13 (0.23)	0.24 (0.34)
South	-1.06** (0.44)	-0.59** (0.25)	-0.74* (0.41)	-1.14** (0.44)	-0.61** (0.25)	-0.75* (0.41)	-1.07** (0.44)	-0.61** (0.25)	-0.73* (0.41)	-1.01** (0.44)	-0.55** (0.25)	-0.76* (0.42)
West	-0.16 (0.41)	0.22 (0.25)	0.22 (0.36)	-0.15 (0.41)	0.24 (0.25)	0.22 (0.36)	-0.20 (0.42)	0.24 (0.25)	0.28 (0.36)	-0.12 (0.42)	0.28 (0.25)	0.32 (0.36)
TV News	0.13 (0.11)	-0.04 (0.06)	-0.12 (0.08)	0.12 (0.11)	-0.05 (0.06)	-0.12 (0.08)	0.14 (0.11)	-0.05 (0.06)	-0.13 (0.08)	0.12 (0.11)	-0.04 (0.06)	-0.11 (0.09)
Interest pol.	-0.34** (0.16)	-0.29** (0.10)	-0.33** (0.14)	-0.37** (0.16)	-0.30** (0.10)	-0.33** (0.14)	-0.36** (0.16)	-0.29** (0.10)	-0.31** (0.14)	-0.34** (0.16)	-0.29** (0.10)	-0.35** (0.14)
Catholic	-0.46 (0.51)	-0.03 (0.31)	-0.08 (0.49)	0.12 (0.57)	0.28 (0.34)	-0.10 (0.54)	-0.47 (0.51)	0.04 (0.31)	-0.08 (0.48)	-0.42 (0.51)	0.00 (0.31)	-0.06 (0.49)
Prot-Ev	-1.14 (0.84)	0.56 (0.41)	0.57 (0.64)	-0.42 (0.91)	0.94** (0.46)	0.61 (0.71)	-1.07 (0.84)	0.62 (0.42)	0.47 (0.65)	-1.11 (0.84)	0.59 (0.41)	0.65 (0.64)
Attendance				-0.25** (0.12)	-0.14** (0.07)	0.01 (0.10)						
Moral values							-0.05 (0.05)	0.01 (0.03)	0.07 (0.04)			
Relig leader										-0.09 (0.12)	-0.14* (0.07)	-0.23** (0.11)
Intercept	-1.23 (1.18)	1.79** (0.68)	0.13 (1.02)	-0.98 (1.20)	1.85** (0.69)	0.09 (1.03)	-0.54 (1.33)	1.64** (0.77)	-0.61 (1.12)	-0.94 (1.25)	2.13** (0.72)	0.71 (1.07)
log Lik		-847.0			-836.2			-840.1			-840.1	
McFadden R ²		0.46			0.47			0.46			0.46	
Observations		1 013			1 006			1 009			1 005	

Source: Multinomial logistic models, reference category vote for AMLO. 2018 CNEP Mexico' sample. ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Multinomial regressions compare the effect of explanatory variables on each category of the dependent variable, taking one category as reference. In Tables 2 and 3, the reference category of the dependent variable is vote for AMLO. In both tables, statistically significant variables are marked, and positive signs indicate support for JAM (PRI), others, or RAC (PAN-PRD), whereas negative signs indicate support for AMLO (Morena).

Models from Table 2 suggest that the higher levels of Church attendance increase support for AMLO, when compared to the PRI and other political options, whereas the stronger preferences for political leaders with religious principles increase support for AMLO, when compared to the PAN's candidate. Interestingly, model 2 shows that Protestants/Evangelicals are more likely to prefer other political options when compared to AMLO. Additionally, moral values do not play any role, as seen in model 3.

Regarding control variables, previous vote for AMLO and EPN, being married, living in the South, holding a leftist ideology, and keeping interest in politics increased support for AMLO. In contrast, women, previous vote for JVM, and party identification with the PAN and the PRI decreased support for Morena's candidate.

In order to fully test whether religious factors are associated to vote choice, Table 3 shows two models, labelled as 5, and 6. These two models show interaction terms between religious affiliations and religious factors. One model shows interaction terms for Catholics, whereas the other one shows interaction terms for Protestants/Evangelicals.

Across Catholics, Church attendance and moral values increase the likelihood to vote for AMLO, whereas political leadership with religious principles did not show any statistical significance. Across Protestants/Evangelicals, Church attendance decreases support for AMLO, whereas moral values and political leadership with religious principles did not play any role.

Overall, Catholics who frequently attend Church and hold traditional moral values were more likely to vote for AMLO, whereas Protestants/Evangelicals who frequently attend Church are less likely to support him. Thus, available evidence suggests that arguably, religious appeals made by Morena's candidate have a positive impact on Catholic voters, whereas the same appeals did not work so well among Protestants and Evangelicals.

In order to enhance our understanding of multinomial logistic models, estimations of predicted probabilities of main variables of interest are shown in Figures 1 and 2. The first figure shows three panels among Catholics: A) Church attendance, B) moral values, and C) preferences for a leader with religious principles.

Catholics who frequently attend Church increase support for AMLO in 16 points, from 52 among those who practically never attend to 68 among those who attend on weekly basis. In contrast, other options lose support. Regarding moral values, al-

TABLE 3. Determinants of voting in Mexico's presidential elections, 2018 (interactive models)

Variable	(5)			(6)			(7)			(8)		
	JAM	Others	RAC	JAM	Others	RAC	JAM	Others	RAC	JAM	Others	RAC
Female	0.46 (0.30)	-0.10 (0.18)	0.03 (0.26)	0.46 (0.30)	-0.09 (0.18)	0.03 (0.26)	0.38 (0.30)	-0.07 (0.18)	0.06 (0.26)	0.42 (0.30)	-0.07 (0.18)	0.02 (0.26)
AMLO12	-2.36** (0.81)	-1.82** (0.29)	-1.87** (0.56)	-2.36** (0.81)	-1.82** (0.29)	-1.86** (0.56)	-2.34** (0.81)	-1.81** (0.29)	-1.84** (0.56)	-2.29** (0.81)	-1.81** (0.29)	-1.85** (0.57)
JVM12	-0.05 (0.53)	-0.42 (0.28)	1.07** (0.34)	-0.06 (0.53)	-0.43 (0.28)	1.06** (0.34)	-0.10 (0.54)	-0.45 (0.28)	1.05** (0.34)	-0.04 (0.53)	-0.44 (0.28)	1.05** (0.34)
EPN12	0.65* (0.35)	-1.07** (0.25)	-0.44 (0.37)	0.65* (0.35)	-1.07** (0.25)	-0.43 (0.37)	0.67* (0.36)	-1.09** (0.25)	-0.47 (0.37)	0.71** (0.36)	-1.09** (0.25)	-0.42 (0.37)
Married	-0.49 (0.30)	-0.37** (0.19)	-0.28 (0.28)	-0.49 (0.30)	-0.37** (0.19)	-0.29 (0.28)	-0.53* (0.30)	-0.38** (0.19)	-0.30 (0.28)	-0.51* (0.31)	-0.36* (0.19)	-0.31 (0.28)
PID PRI	3.07** (0.41)	0.76* (0.40)	0.48 (0.54)	3.07** (0.41)	0.77* (0.40)	0.48 (0.54)	3.14** (0.42)	0.76* (0.41)	0.51 (0.54)	3.06** (0.42)	0.76* (0.40)	0.45 (0.54)
PID PAN	0.76 (1.18)	1.37** (0.66)	3.67** (0.60)	0.77 (1.18)	1.37** (0.66)	3.68** (0.60)	0.85 (1.18)	1.33** (0.66)	3.67** (0.60)	0.77 (1.18)	1.30* (0.67)	3.70** (0.61)
PID Morena	-1.70** (0.62)	-1.26** (0.24)	-2.75** (0.74)	-1.70** (0.62)	-1.26** (0.24)	-2.77** (0.74)	-1.73** (0.63)	-1.28** (0.24)	-2.82** (0.74)	-1.69** (0.62)	-1.28** (0.24)	-2.71** (0.74)
Ideology	0.15** (0.06)	0.06 (0.04)	0.15** (0.05)	0.15** (0.06)	0.06 (0.04)	0.15** (0.05)	0.14** (0.06)	0.05 (0.04)	0.16** (0.05)	0.14** (0.06)	0.05 (0.04)	0.15** (0.05)
Education	-0.06 (0.09)	-0.08 (0.06)	-0.01 (0.09)	-0.06 (0.09)	-0.08 (0.06)	-0.01 (0.09)	-0.06 (0.09)	-0.08 (0.06)	-0.02 (0.09)	-0.05 (0.09)	-0.08 (0.06)	-0.01 (0.09)
Income	-0.01 (0.08)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.10 (0.08)	-0.01 (0.08)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.10 (0.08)	-0.00 (0.08)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.09 (0.08)	-0.01 (0.08)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.09 (0.08)
Urban	-0.04 (0.21)	-0.04 (0.12)	-0.12 (0.17)	-0.04 (0.21)	-0.04 (0.12)	-0.13 (0.17)	-0.04 (0.21)	-0.04 (0.12)	-0.13 (0.18)	-0.05 (0.21)	-0.04 (0.12)	-0.13 (0.17)
Age	-0.03 (0.11)	-0.05 (0.07)	-0.09 (0.10)	-0.03 (0.11)	-0.05 (0.07)	-0.09 (0.10)	-0.06 (0.11)	-0.05 (0.07)	-0.10 (0.10)	-0.04 (0.11)	-0.05 (0.07)	-0.10 (0.10)
North	-0.39 (0.39)	0.20 (0.24)	0.26 (0.34)	-0.39 (0.39)	0.19 (0.24)	0.26 (0.34)	-0.39 (0.39)	0.18 (0.24)	0.26 (0.34)	-0.37 (0.39)	0.21 (0.24)	0.26 (0.34)
South	-1.08** (0.45)	-0.57** (0.26)	-0.76* (0.42)	-1.09** (0.45)	-0.58** (0.26)	-0.78* (0.42)	-1.15** (0.46)	-0.58** (0.26)	-0.77* (0.42)	-1.11** (0.45)	-0.58** (0.26)	-0.75* (0.42)
West	-0.15 (0.43)	0.33 (0.25)	0.36 (0.36)	-0.15 (0.43)	0.33 (0.25)	0.36 (0.36)	-0.14 (0.43)	0.38 (0.26)	0.37 (0.36)	-0.12 (0.43)	0.38 (0.26)	0.38 (0.36)
TV News	0.11 (0.11)	-0.06 (0.06)	-0.11 (0.09)	0.11 (0.11)	-0.06 (0.06)	-0.12 (0.09)	0.09 (0.11)	-0.06 (0.06)	-0.11 (0.09)	0.11 (0.11)	-0.06 (0.06)	-0.11 (0.09)
Interest pol.	-0.38** (0.16)	-0.30** (0.10)	-0.33** (0.14)	-0.38** (0.16)	-0.31** (0.10)	-0.34** (0.14)	-0.39** (0.16)	-0.30** (0.10)	-0.32** (0.14)	-0.38** (0.16)	-0.29** (0.10)	-0.35** (0.15)
Catholic	0.11 (0.57)	0.35 (0.35)	-0.11 (0.55)	0.47 (0.71)	-0.66** (0.32)	-0.82* (0.46)	4.64** (2.03)	1.88** (0.96)	0.40 (1.47)	0.18 (0.58)	0.46 (0.35)	-0.05 (0.55)
Prot.-Ev.	-0.38 (0.91)	1.02** (0.46)	0.56 (0.72)				-2.15 (1.76)	-0.41 (0.84)	-0.82 (1.33)	-8.50 (5.51)	-1.28 (1.69)	-3.66 (2.82)
Attendance	-0.24** (0.12)	-0.13* (0.07)	0.02 (0.11)	-0.24** (0.12)	-0.14* (0.07)	-0.01 (0.11)	0.14 (0.53)	0.31 (0.24)	0.52 (0.36)	-0.25** (0.12)	-0.18** (0.07)	0.01 (0.11)
Relig. leader	-0.06	-0.14*	-0.21*	-0.06	-0.14*	-0.22*	0.05	0.11	-0.34	-0.09	-0.16**	-0.24**

TABLE 3. Determinants of voting in Mexico's presidential elections, 2018 (interactive models) (continuation)

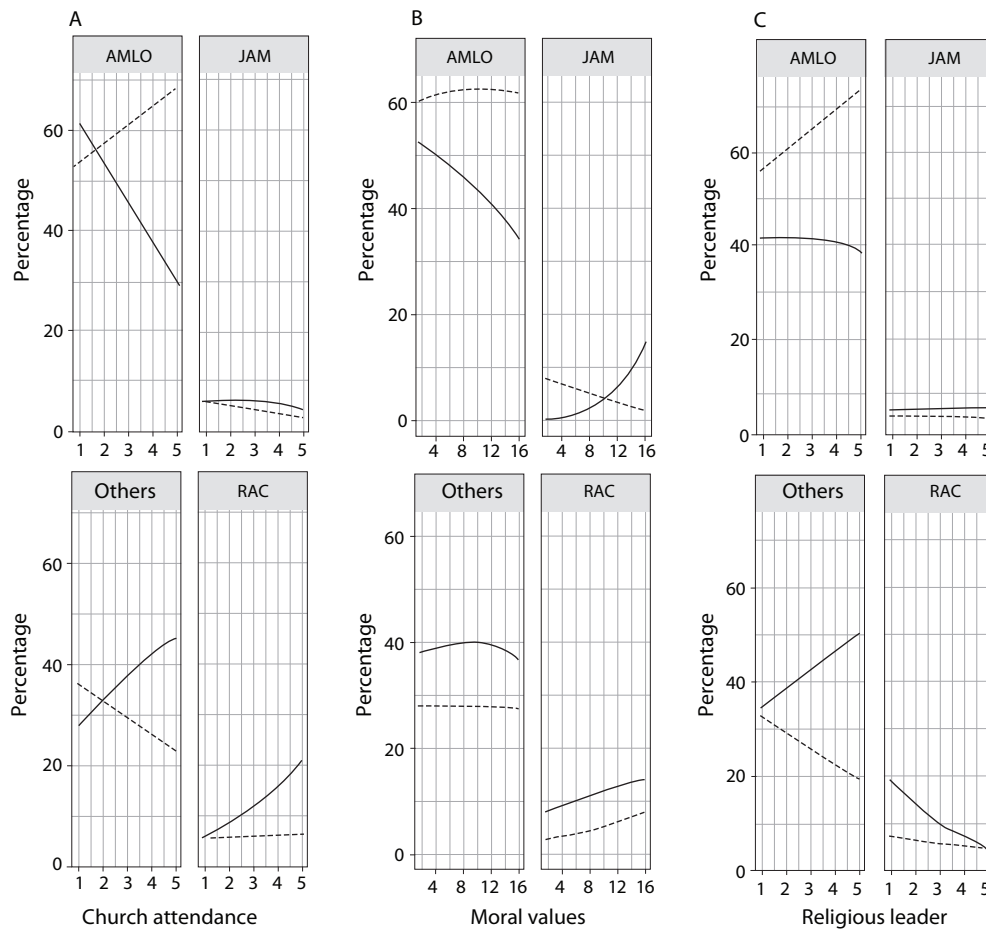
Variable	(5)			(6)			(7)			(8)		
	JAM	Others	RAC	JAM	Others	RAC	JAM	Others	RAC	JAM	Others	RAC
	(0.13)	(0.08)	(0.11)	(0.13)	(0.08)	(0.11)	(0.36)	(0.19)	(0.32)	(0.13)	(0.08)	(0.12)
Moral values	-0.05 (0.05)	0.01 (0.03)	0.06 (0.04)	-0.05 (0.05)	0.01 (0.03)	0.06 (0.04)	0.25* (0.15)	0.03 (0.07)	0.06 (0.10)	-0.06 (0.05)	0.01 (0.03)	0.04 (0.04)
None				0.32 (0.91)	-1.04** (0.47)	-0.97 (0.73)						
Cath:Att							-0.39 (0.55)	-0.48* (0.25)	-0.55 (0.38)			
Cath:Rel L							-0.14 (0.38)	-0.31 (0.20)	0.14 (0.34)			
Cath:Moral							-0.34** (0.15)	-0.03 (0.07)	-0.01 (0.11)			
Prot-Ev:Att										0.20 (0.61)	0.48* (0.27)	0.15 (0.40)
Prot-Ev:Rel L										0.33 (0.53)	0.23 (0.27)	0.27 (0.41)
Prot-Ev:Moral										0.48 (0.40)	-0.01 (0.11)	0.24 (0.17)
Constant	-0.21 (1.42)	2.08** (0.83)	-0.09 (1.20)	-0.53 (1.65)	3.11** (0.93)	0.82 (1.36)	-3.96* (2.21)	0.91 (1.08)	-0.42 (1.63)	0.14 (1.44)	2.11** (0.84)	0.21 (1.21)
log Lik		-822.7			-822.3			-815.5			-817.3	
McFadden R2		0.47			0.47			0.47			0.47	
Observations		994			994			994			994	

Source: Multinomial logistic models, reference category vote for AMLO. 2018 CNEP Mexico' sample. ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

though AMLO gains some points among Catholics, the main effect works when compared to non-Catholics. In addition, the PAN's candidate also wins support within Catholics with highly religious moral values, whereas the PRI's candidate loses it. Finally, regarding preferences for leaders with religious principles among Catholics, AMLO increases support, whereas all other candidates lose points.

The second graph also shows the same three panels but among Protestants and Evangelicals. AMLO loses support in all three panels, whereas other options increase it among Protestant and Evangelical churchgoers (panel D), and those who strongly prefer a leader with religious principles (panel F). Regarding moral values, AMLO and other options lose support, whereas the PAN's candidate increases 16 points (panel E).⁵

⁵ Interactive models among secularists and religious dimensions (not shown) revealed statistically insignificant coefficients for interaction terms. In addition, Church attendance was dropped from the interactive model across secularists, due to the lack of variation, because all secularists cases were placed in the "I practically never attend Church" cell.

FIGURE 1. Predicted probabilities of vote choice among Catholics, Mexico 2018

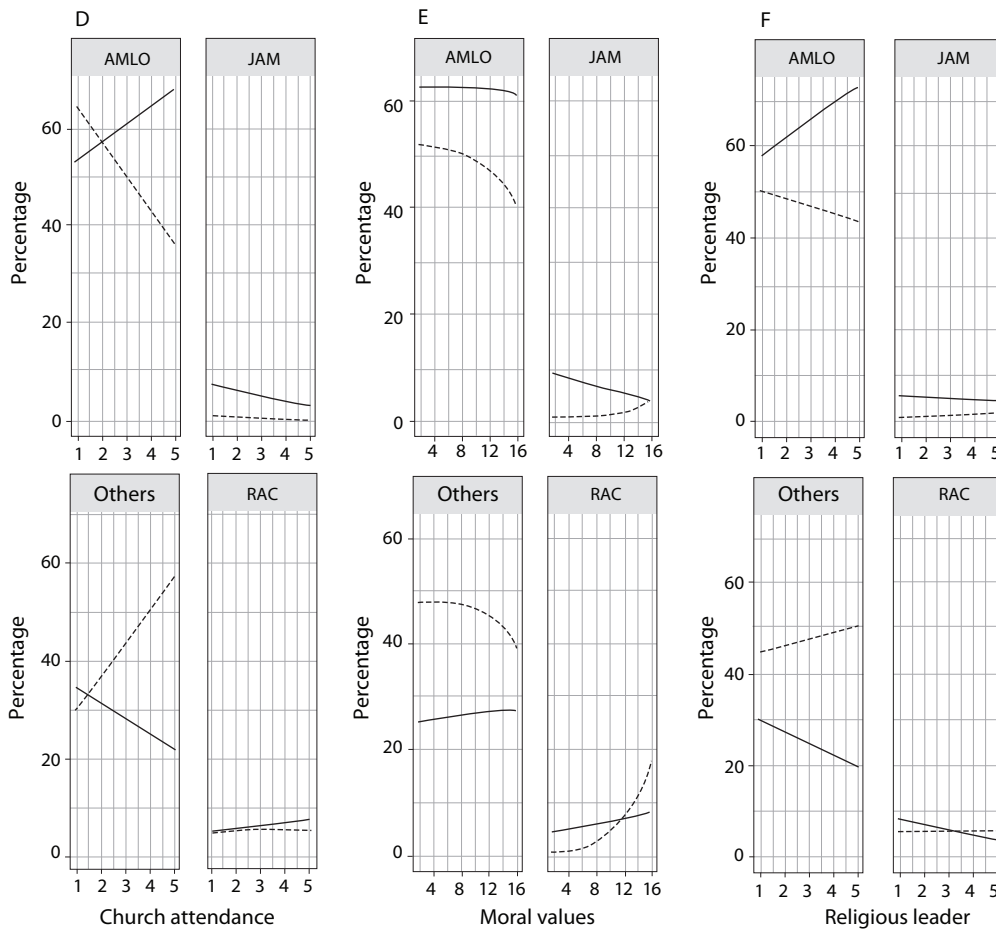
Source: Model 5 from Table 3. Author's estimations using R, library sjPlot (Lüdtke, 2019). Catholics are dashed lines, non-Catholics and secularists are solid lines.

CONCLUSIONS

Although more theoretical and empirical work is required, there is preliminary evidence that suggests that religious variables are related to preferences for the left wing in Mexico. This finding derives from statistical analyses from the 2018 CNEP surveys. Overall, Catholic church attendance and preferences for leaders with religious principles seemed to slightly increase the likelihood to vote for López Obrador. Among other factors that explain this noticeable change, it is important to consider AMLO's discourse, in which he emphasized values in a generic sense, continuously making religious appeals, and avoiding specifics on controversial issues, such as debates over moral values.

In this way, Morena not only became an attractive party for its traditional leftwing constituency, but also for observant Catholics, allowing AMLO to win the

FIGURE 2. Predicted probabilities of vote choice among Protestants/Evangelicals, Mexico 2018




Source: Model 6 from Table 3. Author's estimations using R, library sjPlot (Lüdtke, 2019). Protestants/Evangelicals are dashed lines, Catholics and secularists are solid lines.

election by means of building a broader coalition among secular and religious Catholic voters.

Therefore, it is plausible to guess that López Obrador will continue to make religious appeals, avoiding controversies over moral values to retain religious voters. In addition, AMLO will need to offer specific policies that favor Protestants and Evangelicals, such as access to mass media and increasing public appearances, in order to gain, as much as possible, Evangelical clergy and parishioners' support.

Taking all these pieces of evidence together, these insightful findings could entail an important shift in Mexico's religious division, in which the socially conservative left would receive support from observant Catholics. This distinction seems to depend on whether controversies over moral values are not specifically dis-

cussed in campaigns. This could imply that moral values are more relevant to Protestants and Evangelicals, and for these voters AMLO's vague message on this front did not play well.

Finally, these potential mechanisms require further theoretical and empirical elaboration to disentangle how and why religious voters are to some extent, taking sides with Mexico's new leftist political party. It also opens doors for future research in Mexican politics, in which a relevant test would be whether candidates who are making religious appeals or talking about values in a generic sense, they could attract or get away religious voters across religious affiliations. 

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APPENDIX

TABLE A1. Descriptive statistics

Variable	Mean	Std.Dev.	Min.	Max.	Pct. Valid.
Abortion	2.91	0.97	1	4	96.64
AMLO12	0.18	0.39	0	1	100.00
AMLO18	0.49	0.50	0	1	100.00
Church attendance	3.34	1.50	1	5	99.37
Catholic	0.82	0.38	0	1	100.00
Central	0.32	0.47	0	1	100.00
Corruption perception	0.14	0.35	0	1	100.00
Voices Critics (demo)	1.74	0.90	1	4	98.11
Elections (demo)	1.47	0.72	1	4	98.39
Employment (demo)	1.33	0.63	1	4	98.53
Income gap (demo)	1.59	0.81	1	4	97.41
Minorities (demo)	1.53	0.78	1	4	96.01
Free pres (demo)	1.61	0.84	1	4	96.64
Eco growth (econ)	4.03	3.12	1	10	99.37
Age	3.60	1.67	1	6	100.00
EPN12	0.24	0.43	0	1	100.00
Equality (econ)	5.9	3.25	1	10	98.67
Education	4.84	1.95	1	9	99.86
Corruption (ev natl gov)	4.3	0.78	1	5	99.02
Crime (ev natl gov)	4.06	0.85	1	5	99.02
Employment (ev natl gov)	4.00	0.85	1	5	98.88
Nat eco (ev natl gov)	3.86	0.83	1	5	99.51
Poverty (ev natl gov)	4.12	0.83	1	5	99.16
Feelings AMLO	7.34	3.02	0	10	97.48
Gay adoption	2.97	1.01	1	4	96.85
Gay marriage	2.61	1.05	1	4	96.15
Gender	0.51	0.50	0	1	100.00
PID Morena	0.21	0.41	0	1	100.00
PID PAN	0.06	0.24	0	1	100.00
PID PRI	0.09	0.28	0	1	100.00
Income	2.88	1.92	1	9	90.20
Interest in Politics	2.28	0.95	1	4	99.86
Left Right	5.22	2.82	1	10	78.36
JAM18	0.09	0.29	0	1	100.00
JVM12	0.14	0.34	0	1	100.00
Relig law	4.39	3.14	1	10	98.53
Urban	2.52	0.76	1	3	100.00

TABLE A1. Descriptive statistics (continuation)

Variable	Mean	Std.Dev.	Min.	Max.	Pct. Valid.
Marijuana	3.01	0.97	1	4	98.11
North	0.26	0.44	0	1	100.00
Death penalty	2.56	1.09	1	4	97.27
Priv/Pub (econ)	7.49	2.89	1	10	98.95
Prot/Evang	0.08	0.27	0	1	100.00
RAC18	0.12	0.33	0	1	100.00
Rel Princ/Leader	2.21	1.21	1	5	98.04
Religious groups	0.03	0.17	0	1	100.00
Resp gov (econ)	6.20	3.18	1	10	99.09
Security perception	0.56	0.50	0	1	100.00
Services taxes (econ)	6.15	3.11	1	10	98.18
Women role (econ)	7.54	2.96	1	10	99.65
South	0.21	0.41	0	1	100.00
TV News	3.82	1.48	1	5	100.00

Source: Mexican Sample of the 2018 CNEP post electoral surveys, 1 428 respondents in total.

TABLE A2. Vote Choice for Morena, Structural Equation Models

Latent variables	Model I			Model II		
	Estimate	Std.Err.	Beta	Estimate	Std.Err.	Beta
<i>Religiosity</i>						
Church attendance	1.000		0.730			
Religious groups	0.029	0.015	0.185+			
<i>Religion on politics</i>						
Religious principles/Leader	1.000			1.000		0.292
Religious law	3.788	0.598	0.482*	4.350	1.024	0.494*
<i>Moral values</i>						
Abortion	1.000		0.664	1.000	0.621	0.645
Gay marriage	1.227	0.061	0.753*	1.301	0.076	0.777*
Gay adoption	1.197	0.059	0.763*	1.278	0.074	0.779*
Death penalty	-0.556	0.056	-0.331*	-0.575	0.068	-0.332*
Marijuana	1.035	0.055	0.682*	1.022	0.067	0.646*
<i>Economics</i>						
Equality	1.000		0.075	1.000		0.089
Services taxes	2.032	1.227	0.159+	1.693	1.031	0.157+
Economic growth	-1.880	1.149	-0.148+	-1.359	0.929	-0.131
Private/Public enterprises	3.397	1.918	0.284+	2.967	1.750	0.301+
Responsive government	1.650	1.048	0.126	2.245	1.371	0.204+
Women role	7.945	4.489	0.652+	5.652	3.299	0.562+
<i>Democracy</i>						
Voice of critics	1.000		0.499	1.000		0.479
Employment	0.910	0.063	0.644*	0.957	0.078	0.669*
Elections	1.110	0.073	0.705*	1.163	0.092	0.720*
Income gap	1.230	0.082	0.696*	1.290	0.103	0.703*
Free press	1.320	0.086	0.719*	1.350	0.108	0.698*
Protection minorities	0.126	0.081	0.747*	1.270	0.100	0.724*
<i>Evaluation nat'l gov</i>						
Poverty	1.000		0.841	1.000		0.850
Crime	0.910	0.033	0.754*	0.897	0.037	0.748*
Employment	0.994	0.032	0.821*	0.975	0.037	0.814*
Corruption	0.866	0.030	0.774*	0.864	0.034	0.787*
<i>AMLO</i>						
Party ID Morena	1.000		0.481	1.000		0.488
Vote AMLO 2012	0.839	0.080	0.435*	0.807	0.091	0.434*
Feelings AMLO	9.783	0.750	0.643*	9.004	0.827	0.640*

TABLE A2. Vote Choice for Morena, Structural Equation Models (continuation)

Regresiones	Modelo I			Modelo II		
	Coficiente	Err. Est.	Beta	Coficiente	Err. Est.	Beta
<i>AMLO</i>						
Religiosity	-0.012	0.021	-0.066			
Church attendance				-0.001	0.007	-0.001
Rel on pol	0.066	0.106	0.134	0.152	0.129	0.251
Moral values	0.016	0.015	0.052	0.007	0.020	0.020
Economics (left)	0.120	0.141	0.148	0.114	0.143	0.156
Democracy	0.001	0.029	0.002	0.006	0.033	0.012
Ev nat'l gov (neg)	0.053	0.016	0.184*	0.064	0.019	0.207*
Vote for AMLO 2018						
AMLO	2.035	0.165	0.814*	1.708	0.169	0.749*
Religiosity	0.038	0.041	0.081			
Church attendance				0.022	0.012	0.068+
Rel on pol	-0.021	0.179	-0.017	0.131	0.190	0.095
Moral values	-0.064	0.027	-0.082*	-0.063	0.030	-0.081*
Economics (left)	0.105	0.218	0.052	0.291	0.253	0.175
Democracy	-0.025	0.049	-0.022	-0.043	0.049	-0.038
Ev nat'l gov (neg)	0.026	0.027	0.035	0.036	0.030	0.050
Catholic				-0.038	0.056	-0.030
Protestant/Evangelical				-0.118	0.072	-0.068+
Gender				-0.007	0.027	-0.007
Age				0.017	0.009	0.058+
Public security perception				-0.001	0.028	-0.001
Left-Right				-0.016	0.005	-0.095*
Urban				0.017	0.051	0.010
Income				0.003	0.008	0.012
Education				0.007	0.009	0.028
TV news				0.004	0.010	0.012
North				0.012	0.045	0.010
Central				0.016	0.043	0.015
South				0.102	0.045	0.087*
Comparative fit index			0.94			0.84
Tucker-Lewis			0.93			0.82
Root mean square error of approx.			0.03			0.04
Standardized root mean square residual			0.03			0.06
Observations			1139			846

Source: Author's estimations using R, library lavaan (Rosseel, 2012). Mexico 2018 CNEP post electoral survey sample. First observed variables fixed at one for identification purposes. *Notes:* * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.10$.

TABLE A3. Vote choice for Morena, binary logistic models

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	Est./SE	Est./SE	Est./SE	Est./SE	Est./SE
Party ID Morena	0.203* (0.034)	0.202* (0.034)	0.201* (0.034)	0.203* (0.034)	
Vote AMLO 2012	0.191* (0.036)	0.191* (0.036)	0.190* (0.036)	0.192* (0.036)	
Feelings AMLO	0.064* (0.005)	0.065* (0.005)	0.064* (0.005)	0.064* (0.005)	
AMLO ¹					0.076* (0.004)
Church attendance	0.025* (0.011)		0.025* (0.011)	0.025* (0.011)	0.026* (0.011)
Religiosity ²		0.026* (0.010)			
Religion on politics ³	0.002 (0.004)	0.002 (0.004)			
Rel princip & leader			0.017+ (0.010)	0.017+ (0.010)	0.017+ (0.010)
Rel law				-0.001 (0.004)	0.000 (0.005)
Moral values ⁴	-0.009+ (0.005)	-0.009+ (0.005)	-0.008+ (0.005)	-0.008+ (0.005)	-0.008+ (0.005)
Catholic	-0.043 (0.055)	-0.045 (0.055)	-0.047 (0.054)	-0.041 (0.055)	-0.039 (0.057)
Protestant/Evangelical	-0.119 (0.073)	-0.126+ (0.074)	-0.127+ (0.073)	-0.121+ (0.073)	-0.126+ (0.076)
Gender	-0.005 (0.027)	-0.006 (0.027)	-0.005 (0.027)	-0.006 (0.027)	-0.009 (0.028)
Age	0.016+ (0.009)	0.016+ (0.009)	0.016+ (0.009)	0.017+ (0.009)	0.022* (0.010)
Public security	-0.006 (0.027)	-0.006 (0.027)	-0.002 (0.027)	-0.005 (0.027)	-0.002 (0.029)
Left-Right	-0.019* (0.005)	-0.019* (0.005)	-0.019* (0.005)	-0.018* (0.005)	-0.023* (0.005)
Economics ⁵ (left)	0.005* (0.002)	0.005* (0.002)	0.005* (0.002)	0.005* (0.002)	0.006* (0.002)
Ev nat'l gov ⁶ (neg.)	0.018* (0.005)	0.018* (0.005)	0.019* (0.005)	0.019* (0.005)	0.018* (0.005)
Interest in politics	0.022 (0.015)	0.022 (0.015)	0.022 (0.015)	0.023 (0.015)	0.031* (0.015)
Urban	0.022 (0.050)	0.022 (0.050)	0.027 (0.050)	0.023 (0.050)	0.031 (0.052)
Income	0.000 (0.008)	0.000 (0.008)	0.001 (0.008)	0.001 (0.008)	0.004 (0.008)
Education	0.008 (0.009)	0.008 (0.009)	0.009 (0.009)	0.009 (0.009)	0.009 (0.009)

TABLE A3. Vote choice for Morena, binary logistic models (continuation)

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	Est./SE	Est./SE	Est./SE	Est./SE	Est./SE
TV News	0.005 (0.010)	0.005 (0.010)	0.004 (0.010)	0.005 (0.010)	0.007 (0.010)
North	-0.002 (0.046)	-0.001 (0.046)	-0.005 (0.045)	-0.001 (0.046)	-0.010 (0.047)
Central	0.003 (0.043)	0.003 (0.043)	0.002 (0.043)	0.006 (0.043)	0.024 (0.044)
South	0.087+ (0.046)	0.086+ (0.046)	0.086+ (0.045)	0.088+ (0.046)	0.122* (0.047)
Democracy ⁷					-0.004 (0.004)
Intercept	-0.566* (0.160)	-0.565* (0.160)	-0.615* (0.163)	-0.623* (0.165)	-0.698* (0.178)
Observations	877	877	880	877	844
AIC	860.8	860.2	861.5	860.8	855.5
Log-Likelihood	-406.4	-406.1	-406.7	-405.4	-403.8
McFadden (pseud R ²)	0.61	0.61	0.61	0.61	0.61

Source: Author's estimations using R, routine glm. Mexico 2018 CNEP post electoral survey sample. Robust standard errors. Notes: * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.10$. Notes: ¹AMLO: PID Morena + voto AMLO 2012 + feelings AMLO. ²Religiosity: church attendance + religious groups. ³Religion on politics: religious principles & leader + religious law. ⁴Moral values: abortion + gay marriage + gay adoption + death penalty + marijuana. ⁵Economics: equality + services taxes + economic growth + private / public enterprises + responsive government. ⁶Evaluation national government: poverty + crime + employment + corruption. ⁷Democracy: voice of critics + employment + elections + income gap + free press + protection minorities.

TABLE A4. Vote choice in Mexico, 2018, bayesian multinomial probit model

Variable	PAN / Other				PRI / Other				Morena / Other			
	Coef.	Std. Dev.	2.5 %	97.5 %	Coef.	Std. Dev.	2.5 %	97.5 %	Coef.	Std. Dev.	2.5 %	97.5 %
PID PAN	1.18	0.38	0.65	1.95	-0.32	0.43	-0.96	0.67	-1.48	0.50	-2.51	-0.49
PID PRI	-0.10	0.27	-0.67	0.33	1.16	0.17	0.79	1.50	-1.31	0.43	-2.14	-0.54
PID Morena	-0.56	0.17	-0.89	-0.23	-0.15	0.23	-0.55	0.27	1.09	0.21	0.65	1.48
Rel princ & leader	-0.02	0.04	-0.10	0.07	0.03	0.05	-0.06	0.13	0.12	0.06	0.01	0.23
Gay marriage	0.01	0.05	-0.09	0.13	-0.08	0.08	-0.21	0.07	-0.02	0.08	-0.18	0.15
Abortion	0.06	0.06	-0.04	0.20	0.02	0.07	-0.10	0.15	-0.09	0.09	-0.28	0.08
Catholic	0.07	0.25	-0.42	0.59	-0.10	0.23	-0.53	0.34	-0.32	0.26	-0.83	0.20
Prot / evangelical	0.12	0.31	-0.48	0.80	-0.66	0.34	-1.27	0.15	-0.69	0.32	-1.30	-0.01
Church attendance	0.07	0.04	-0.01	0.17	-0.03	0.04	-0.11	0.07	0.11	0.06	0.004	0.22
Gender	0.08	0.10	-0.10	0.32	0.31	0.12	0.09	0.54	0.04	0.14	-0.24	0.31
Age	-0.01	0.04	-0.09	0.07	-0.03	0.04	-0.11	0.06	0.06	0.06	-0.05	0.16
Urban	-0.05	0.07	-0.21	0.08	-0.03	0.09	-0.21	0.13	0.04	0.09	-0.15	0.20
Income	-0.001	0.04	-0.08	0.07	0.06	0.03	-0.01	0.12	0.05	0.04	-0.03	0.14
Education	0.02	0.04	-0.04	0.09	-0.02	0.04	-0.08	0.07	0.08	0.05	-0.003	0.18
TV News	-0.02	0.04	-0.11	0.06	0.03	0.04	-0.05	0.11	0.09	0.04	-0.003	0.17
North	-0.12	0.16	-0.48	0.20	-0.07	0.25	-0.55	0.42	0.02	0.22	-0.43	0.40
South	-0.08	0.16	-0.38	0.24	0.03	0.25	-0.47	0.48	0.78	0.22	0.35	1.22
Central	-0.05	0.17	-0.38	0.31	0.28	0.19	-0.08	0.63	0.24	0.19	-0.13	0.62
Left-Right	0.04	0.03	-0.003	0.10	0.04	0.02	-0.001	0.09	-0.07	0.03	-0.12	-0.01
Vote AMLO 2012	-0.17	0.18	-0.49	0.18	-0.14	0.21	-0.55	0.26	1.49	0.24	1.02	1.92
Vote JVM 2012	0.63	0.24	0.29	1.16	0.03	0.28	-0.58	0.47	0.21	0.21	-0.22	0.57
Vote EPN 2012	0.17	0.18	-0.12	0.59	0.64	0.15	0.36	0.93	0.77	0.19	0.42	1.14
Intercept	-1.30	0.57	-2.57	-0.39	-1.30	0.59	-2.36	-0.07	-1.37	0.59	-2.59	-0.24

Source: Author's estimations using R, library MNP (Imai and Dyk, 2005). Mexico 2018 CNEP post electoral survey sample. Uninformative priors, 95 per cent credible intervals, observations = 916.

Traditional Media and Social Networks in the 2018 Presidential Election*

Ulises Beltrán**

ABSTRACT: This article seeks to understand the relationship between voter preferences and both media consumption and attention to political advertising during the last presidential election in Mexico. To do this, I discuss some statistical models where the dependent variables are the vote for each candidate and the change or stability in their preferences, and the independent variables are the intensity of media consumption, measured through weekly exposure to news about the campaign, and individual recollection of the candidates' political ads. These models do not show a significant relationship between media consumption and electoral preferences. Contrary to the belief that social media helped the winning candidate, this study finds no empirical support for such claim, in line with the literature that finds that the media has little or no effect on voter preferences.

KEYWORDS: 2018 election, media, media effects, social media.

Medios de comunicación tradicionales y redes sociales en la elección presidencial de 2018

RESUMEN: Este trabajo busca conocer la relación entre las preferencias de los electores y su consumo de medios y atención a la publicidad durante la pasada elección presidencial en México. Para ello, se discuten modelos estadísticos donde las variables dependientes son el voto a cada uno de los candidatos y el cambio o estabilidad en las preferencias por éstos, y las independientes son la intensidad en el uso de medios, medida a través del consumo semanal de noticias sobre la campaña, y la recordación de la publicidad política de los candidatos. Estos modelos no muestran una relación significativa entre el consumo de medios y las preferencias electorales. Frente a la creencia de que

*Translation by Ana Pascoe.

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las redes sociales ayudaron al candidato vencedor, este estudio no encuentra apoyo empírico para la misma, en línea con la tradición que sostiene que los medios tienen efectos mínimos o nulos en las preferencias de los votantes.

PALABRAS CLAVE: elección 2018, medios de comunicación, efectos de medios, redes sociales.

INTRODUCTION

Deliberation on the offers and merits of politicians is a central element of the democratic exercise. Electoral campaigns are highlights of this exercise. Parties and candidates compete to convey their messages to an audience from which they expect to obtain a favorable decision and more concretely, the necessary number of votes to win the election. More than ever, political actors have intensified their communication with voters—within the legal framework that regulates it. This conversation between politicians and the public reaches voters through the media, either through the coverage of campaign events by the news media or through political advertising, in such a way that campaign effects are, ultimately, media effects.

In the 2018 presidential election, media attention to the candidates' campaigns was intense and all of them spread their publicity in the time slots marked by the law. Likewise, all had a notable presence in social networks.

The academic literature regarding the media-driven relationship between politicians and voters has a long tradition in advanced democracies and, over time, has presented opposing views. Early studies supported the idea that the media had “minimal effects” on voters' electoral preferences because electoral choice was shaped by individuals' belonging to broad social groups with common characteristics and because media supply was limited to only a few outlets (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955; Klapper, 1960). A second wave of studies supported the idea of significant media effects on preferences. The literature of this period attributed enormous influence to political marketing on voter preferences, from which it inferred a manipulated and even corrupted electoral competition, particularly because of the decisive influence of television on election results (Manin, 1997; Sartori, 1989, among others).¹

The forms and means of access to information have dramatically changed during the last two decades. On the one hand, the media supply has become much broader and diverse, with the emergence of exclusive news channels, some with explicit political and ideological orientations. In many countries, state networks and channels compete with private channels. On the other hand, the emergence of the Internet has given way to new instruments of information consumption, such as social networks, where the public is informed directly, without editors who classify and

¹ The literature on this subject is very extensive. Long and detailed reviews can be found in Benett and Iyengar, 2008 and 2010.

order the news. Public access to information is increasingly individualized due to a massive and sometimes ideologically oriented supply as well as to new forms of person-to-person, unedited information exchange. All these changes force us to review our previous conclusions about the media effects on voting. The media in Mexico has undergone a similar process of change that is said to have played an important role in the 2018 presidential election.

Media consumption can have three effects on voter preferences; First, the information acquired during the campaign confirms the preferences the voter had at the beginning of the campaign, *i.e.* her candidate preferences do not change; second, the voter drops the candidate she preferred at the beginning of the campaign, *i.e.* the candidate loses the voter's preference; and third, the voter changes her preferences in favor of another candidate, *i.e.* the latter gains the voter's preferences. The central purpose of this study is to determine if any significant relationship can be identified between the voter's information sources and how vote preferences moved during the campaign.

This article main draws from the CIDE-CSES 2018 National Election Study. This study consists of a national panel survey of the same individuals in four waves. The first wave was conducted between May 22 and June 3, the second between June 22 and 28, and the third—the first post-election wave—between July 12 and 18. The last wave was conducted in January 2019, with the new government in place. In this article I use only the first three waves. The survey strategy allowed us to interview the same 1 237 individuals in each of the first three waves. For the fourth wave, recollected six months later, 221 participants were lost—an attrition of 18 per cent. The methodology of these surveys is described in detail in Annex 1.

NEWS COVERAGE

As in any presidential election, campaigns were prominent in the news media. Table 1 shows the results of the news coverage analysis carried out by students of the UNAM's Faculty of Political Science in 2018 on the INE's behalf (INE, 2018b). The news coverage of the candidates' activities was mostly neutral. When the media goes evaluative, the marks usually lean “negative”; it is critical-oriented information. Table 1 shows that López Obrador was the candidate who received slightly more media coverage, especially during the pre-campaign, but also that he was the candidate with the highest number of negative notes, eleven per cent compared to an average of five per cent for the other two leading candidates. That is, contrary to expectations, the candidate with the most negative coverage was the one who increased his vote preferences the most during the campaign and ended up carrying the election.

For the primary source of voter information, the CIDE-CSES 2018 National Election Study includes a set of questions asking participants to indicate how often they heard campaign news on radio, television, print media, *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *What-*

TABLE 1. Precampaign and campaign qualified news coverage*

	Precampaign (percentage)			Campaign (percentage)		
	Total mentions	Positive	Negative	Total mentions	Positive	Negative
Andrés Manuel López Obrador	37.80	1.60	14.10	28	1.90	11.00
José Antonio Meade	34.60	2.10	7.60	23	1.30	5.10
Ricardo Anaya	27.50	1.20	9.60	21	1.50	4.80
Margarita Zavala	ND	ND	ND	15	0.70	5.50
José Luis Rodríguez	ND	ND	ND	12	1.40	11.20

Source: INE (2018a). *I did not directly include the proportion of mentions that the evaluators qualify as neutral because this can be inferred from the other two percentages.

sApp.² There are other networks available to the public, but several accounts indicate that these three are the most used by candidates and parties to spread political messages (Vázquez, 2018).³

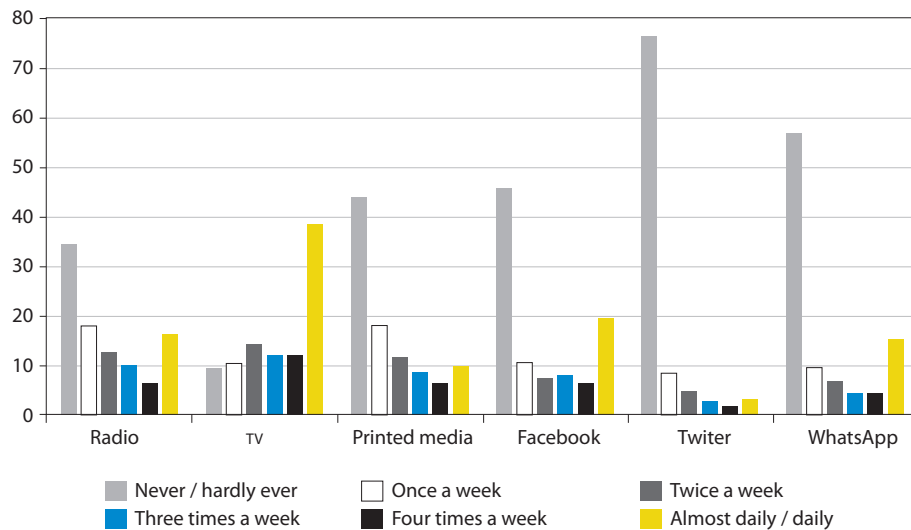
The data reveal marginal voter attention to news information, except for television broadcasting (see Figure 1). Only 30 per cent of our sample seek news information between four times a week and almost daily on any news source. As usual, the role of television as the most used source of information stands out: 51 per cent of interviewees consult news about the campaign on television, 26 per cent on *Facebook*, 24 per cent on radio, 20 per cent on *WhatsApp*, 16 per cent on print media and only 6 per cent on *Twitter*. If we remove the two most extreme channels—television and *Twitter*—, only an average of 24 per cent of people sought information about the campaign more than four days a week.

ADVERTISING

Political advertising in mass media is another central instrument for any political campaign. While the consumption of news through any source—however broad it may be—hits a limited and usually friendly public that is probably less susceptible to changes of opinion and preference, advertising reaches a much larger audience and is directly produced by the candidates themselves, so that it directly conveys the messages with which they want to win the vote. This is the reason why most campaign funding is used for political advertising.

² “Thinking about last week, please tell me how often you heard news about the campaign from the (media source), never, almost never, once a week, twice, three times, four times a week or almost daily?”

³ The most widely used is *Facebook*, followed by *WhatsApp*, *Youtube*, *Instagram*, *Twitter* and the rest. See www.statista.com/statistics/449869/mexico-social-network-penetration. See Social networks on Election Day. <https://www.forbes.com.mx/las-redes-sociales-durante-la-jornada-electoral/> [accessed on: July 8, 2020].

FIGURE 1. Information source of the campaign: Usage frequency per week

Source: National Electoral Study CIDE-CSES 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020).

The elections where candidates spend the most on political advertising are probably those in the United States, because of the characteristics of its electoral system and the cost of broadcasting, and yet there is no strong evidence indicating that advertising has a significant effect on voter preferences. The literature considers that the effect of political advertising on preferences is limited because candidates invest similar amounts to disseminate such advertising, surely under the assumption that if they do not do so they expose themselves to likely defeat (Iyengar and Simon, 2000: 151; Brox y Shaw, 2006; Zaller, 1996). The result is that these conflicting messages nullify each other's possible effect on voter preferences.

In Mexico, the rules of party access to mass media for the circulation of electoral propaganda changed radically in 2008. The reforms passed that year prohibited political parties and any other civil organization from directly buying slots on broadcasting networks to transmit any type of election-related message. To broadcast parties' and candidates' advertisements, as well as various INE announcements on the electoral process, the government granted free access to 12.5 per cent of the advertising slots that a previous law already granted, slots that the INE now distributes among the participating political parties for institutional broadcasting (DOF, 2018).⁴ From then on, access to advertising time for electoral propaganda became markedly inequitable, since the law assigns 30 per cent of the time available to each

⁴The reform was approved at the end of 2007 and published on 14 January 2008. A detailed description of this electoral reform can be found in Buendía and Aspiroz (2011).

of the registered parties and the remaining 70 per cent is distributed based on party votes collected in the previous election.

For the 2018 federal and local elections, the INE had access to nearly 30 million hours of airtime on all radio and television stations between December 14, 2017 and Election Day. This is equivalent to 48 minutes per day in media that were distributed in two and up to three minutes per hour of transmission on each radio station and television channel between 6:00 AM and 12:00 AM. Of these 48 minutes, the parties and candidates daily received 18 minutes on each radio station and television channel. In states with concurrent local elections, the INE allocated 15 minutes per day for local campaigns on each radio station and television channel with coverage in the state. The remaining time was available to the INE.⁵ Each party may freely decide how to distribute their messages in their corresponding time in both local and federal elections.

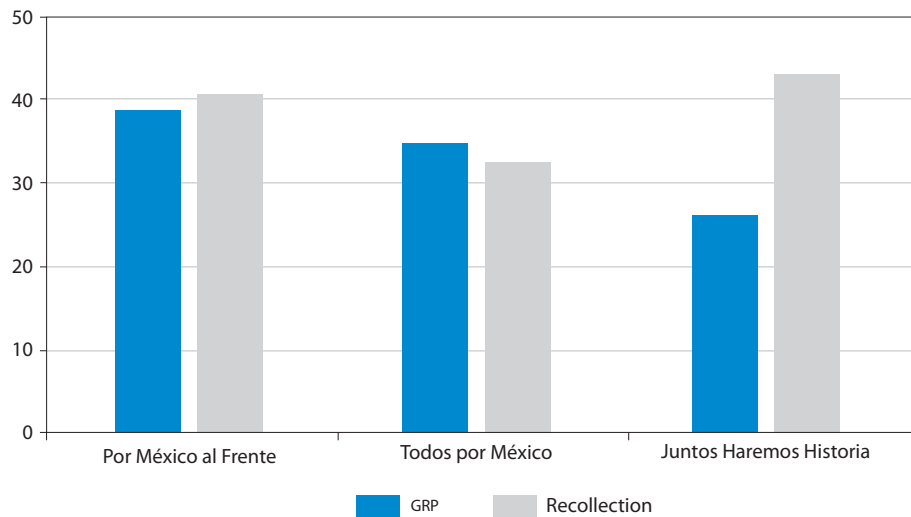
This change in parties' and candidates' access to airtime for the distribution of their political communication messages represented an enormous change compared to the time they used for the same purpose in the 2006 election. In that election period, 142 358 ads were broadcast; in 2018, parties and candidates broadcast just over 41 million ads (INE, 2018b).

For the 2018 presidential election, the coalition *Todos por México* that nominated José Antonio Meade received 39 per cent of the total airtime available to broadcast its ads from the beginning of the pre-campaign until the election; the coalition *Por México al Frente* that nominated Ricardo Anaya received 37 per cent, and the coalition *Juntos Haremos Historia* that nominated Andrés Manuel López Obrador received 23 per cent.⁶ As noted, Ricardo Anaya and José Antonio Meade received similar amounts of airtime (37 and 39 per cent in total), while the winning candidate, López Obrador, received approximately 16 per cent less time and therefore a fewer amount of viewers.

⁵ The commercial value of this space in the media is enormous and meant a significant increase in campaign resources for the parties, even though the nominal value of the direct funding they receive decreased.

⁶ The real measure of access to the media is the so-called "Gross Rating Points" (GRPs), which indicates the proportion of the audience that each channel has per minute; that is, they consider the audience reached with the assigned space. In this case, the second measure is important because, given that the INE assigns the specific spaces in which the announcements are broadcast based on the time corresponding to each party and not the audience at that moment, it could be that some parties obtain a greater audience due to the moment in which the ads are broadcast. This does not occur. Every week, the INE rotates the order of the ads of each party and thus manages to assign a proportional audience that, if not exactly equal, is very similar between the assigned times. *Todos por México* reached 35 per cent of the audience, *Por México al Frente* 39 per cent and *Juntos Haremos Historia* 26 per cent (INE, 2018b). Audience data come from the audience measurement agency Nielsen. I am grateful to José de la Rosa Medero, General Director of Nielsen Mexico, and Olivia Pérez, Data Science Business Leader Media Latam for providing this information to me.

FIGURE 2. Audience reached (GRPs, Nielsen México) and ad recollection (%) May



Source: National Electoral Study CIDE-CSES 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020). Nielsen Media Report.

Despite López Obrador's disadvantage in accessing airtime for the dissemination of his messages due to electoral law, his campaign was very efficient since, as Figure 2 shows, his ads were remembered the most by the population.

In sum, the candidate who received the highest proportion of negative notes on the news coverage of his campaign and who had the least relative media airtime to transmit his ads, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, was the one who obtained the highest proportion of votes.

CHANGES IN VOTER PREFERENCES

The electoral process officially began on December 14, 2017 with the start of what the law defines as the pre-campaign period, where parties and coalitions had to select their candidates, and independent candidates had to meet the requirements for registration. The period ended on February 11, 2018 (INE, 2017). In November 2017, several polls showed that electoral preferences were largely distributed among four candidates: Andrés Manuel López Obrador with 35 per cent of preferences, Ricardo Anaya with 20 per cent, Miguel Osorio Chong with 30 per cent and Margarita Zavala with 12 per cent. As shown, the preferences for the two potential candidates from the PAN added up to 32 per cent, a similar number to that of López Obrador, who was leading the polls. In other words, during the 2018 electoral process, vote preferences for López Obrador grew by nearly 18 percent-

TABLE 2. Electoral preferences and change between the start of the campaign in May (first panel wave) and the post-election survey taken one week after the election (third panel wave)

Candidate	May (%)	July (%)	Change (%)
Ricardo Anaya	25.0	22.1	-2.9
José Antonio Meade	16.1	18.2	2.1
Andrés Manuel López Obrador	38.6	45.8	7.2
Margarita Zavala	0.6	0.0	-0.6
Jaime Rodríguez Calderón	3.2	2.0	-1.2
None	9.4	10.0	0.9
Other	0.0	0.4	0.4
Does not know	7.1	1.4	-5.8

Source: National Electoral Study CIDE-CSES 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020).

age points, while preferences for Ricardo Anaya fell by 11 points and those for José Antonio Meade by seven. The following analyses begin in May because the first wave of the panel survey—which is its empirical basis—began on that date. Table 2 shows the changes in electoral preferences between May and the July post-election survey.

These changes in preferences may seem small. However, in reality almost 60 per cent of the panel participants changed their preferences between the first and the third wave, a very significant proportion of people, while the remaining 40 per cent maintained their preferences during the campaign.

To analyze what happened to voters' preferences during the campaign between the first wave in May and that of July, I estimated three variables that identify whether the preferences for the candidate did not change, whether the candidate gained or whether he lost the voter's preference. In Table 4, I present the percentage of panel participants who fall into each category for each candidate. It is important to note that this set only includes panelists who expressed preferences in May and July. One should also note that López Obrador was by far the candidate who retained or gained the most preferences compared to the other two: 46 per cent versus 22 per cent for Anaya and 26 per cent for Meade.

ANALYSIS

Electoral preferences and media consumption

The candidates' campaign activities are ultimately known to the general public through their presence in mass media and social networks. The most common assumption about this relationship in the previous campaign is that social networks played an important role, particularly in the case of Andrés Manuel López Obrador,

TABLE 3. Changes in preferences between May and the July post-election survey (percentage)

Candidate	Preferences in May	Change between May and July	Changed to				
			Anaya	Meade	AMLO	Other	None
Anaya	25	65	35	16	37	2	11
Meade	16	58	15	42	32	2	10
AMLO	38	40	17	13	60	1	8
Other	4	82	10	10	45	18	18
None	17	82	26	16	38	2	18
Total	100		22	19	45	2	11

Source: National Electoral Study CIDE-CSES 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020).

TABLE 4. Proportion of voters with stable vs. moving preferences between May and July

Preferences	Anaya	Meade	AMLO
Lost	16.4	8.1	8.8
Gained	13.5	19.7	22.4
No change	8.5	6.5	23.4
Total	38.5	34.3	54.5

Source: National Electoral Study CIDE-CSES 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020).

who was allegedly very successful among these media sources. The same is expected of advertising. As mentioned earlier, in the survey we asked about the consumption intensity of each source and we also asked if the interviewee remembered any of the candidate's advertisements. In the three waves of the panel, respondents were asked to state their preferences for the candidates of that time. The third wave was conducted the week after the election and, having asked if the respondent participated the election, he or she was asked to specify for whom he or she voted. Based on this information, I constructed three dichotomous variables—one for each candidate—that have a value of one if the respondent voted for the specific candidate and zero if he or she did not. To identify the relationship of preferences with media and advertising, I ran logistic models in which the dependent variable is the dichotomous variable of preference for each candidate and the inde-

TABLE 5. Preference for each candidate and media consumption as a source of information for the campaign (data from the third wave of the CIDE-CSES Study) (Logistic models)

	Anaya		Meade		AMLO	
	B	Sig.	B	Sig.	B	Sig.
Radio	0.00	N.S.	-0.00	N.S.	0.00	N.S.
Television	-0.00	N.S.	0.01	N.S.	-0.01	N.S.
Print	-0.01	N.S.	0.00	N.S.	0.02	N.S.
Facebook	0.01	N.S.	0.02	N.S.	0.00	N.S.
Twitter	-0.02	N.S.	-0.00	N.S.	0.00	N.S.
WhatsApp	0.01	N.S.	-0.01	N.S.	-0.02	N.S.
Sex	-0.10	N.S.	0.34	***	-0.11	N.S.
Age	-0.09	N.S.	0.29	***	0.01	N.S.
SEL	0.02	N.S.	-0.07	**	0.04	N.S.
Schooling	0.02	***	-0.01	N.S.	-0.01	N.S.
Constant	-1.08	***	-2.48	***	-0.14	N.S.
N	1 237		1 237		1 237	
Pseudo R ²	0.01		0.03		0.01	

Source: National Electoral Study CIDE-CSES 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020).

pendent variable is the consumption intensity of each media source⁷ and the recollection of the candidate's advertising.⁸ In all models, I include sex, age, socioeconomic level (SEL) and years of schooling of the interviewee to discount their possible effects on the relationship between electoral preferences and both media consumption and advertising. Table 5 shows the results.

In no case does the consumption intensity of the different media sources show a statistically significant relationship with the preferences for any of the candidates. The idea that the use of social networks was particularly associated with the preferences for the winning candidate does not seem to hold.

Electoral preferences and voters' recollection of candidate ads

The enormous amount of resources invested in political advertising, namely through the value of airtime usage for dissemination, assumes that candidates' advertising encourages changes in voters' preferences and has significant effects on their preferences in the desired sense. In order to reveal the relationship be-

⁷ "Thinking about last week, please tell me how often you heard news about the campaign from the (media source), never, almost never, once a week, twice, three times, four times a week or almost daily?"

⁸ "During the presidential campaign that just took place, did you see or hear any political ads of (name of candidate) on the radio, television or movies?"

tween advertising recollection and candidates' preferences, I ran two logistic models in which the dependent variable is the same one I used to analyze the effects of media attention and the independent variables are to recall political ads (see Table 6).

TABLE 6. Preference for candidates and recollection of candidate advertising. Logistic models

	Anaya		Meade		AMLO	
	B	Sig.	B	Sig.	B	Sig.
Anaya ads	-0.00	N.S.	-0.00	N.S.	0.00	N.S.
Meade ads	0.00	N.S.	-0.00	N.S.	-0.00	N.S.
AMLO ads	0.00	N.S.	0.00	N.S.	-0.00	N.S.
Sex	-0.09	N.S.	0.34	***	-0.12	N.S.
Age	-0.10	N.S.	0.27	***	0.02	N.S.
SEL	0.02	N.S.	-0.07	**	0.04	N.S.
Schooling	0.02	***	-0.01	N.S.	-0.01	N.S.
Constant	-1.08	***	-2.39	***	-0.16	N.S.
N	1 237		1 237		1 237	
Pseudo R ²	0.01		0.03		0.01	

Source: National Electoral Study CIDE-CSES 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020).

As with media attention, it is not possible to identify any significant relationship between voters' attention to candidates' political advertising and their preferences.

The results of these models are compelling and completely consistent with the finding arguing that it is not possible to find any effect of media consumption or political advertising on electoral preferences.

MEDIA AND ADVERTISING CONSUMPTION AND CHANGES IN PREFERENCES DURING THE CAMPAIGN

In the previous section, we analyzed the relationship of media and advertising with voter preferences in a cross-sectional manner. The National Electoral Study is a panel survey that allows us to know the changes in candidate preference for each participant. Based on the preferences expressed in the first and third waves of the panel, I constructed a variable that shows how voter preferences evolved. The variable has a value of 1 if the candidate lost preferences of voters between May and July, 2 if he won them and 3 if the preferences he obtained in May did not change during the campaign. To estimate the effect of media consumption intensity and advertising recollection over voter's preference stability during the campaign, I ran

multinomial logistic models where the dependent variable is for each candidate whether he kept support, lost voters or won them between May and July, and the independent variables are media consumption intensity—measured by the times that the voter found out about the campaign through the media source in question per week—and the recollection of the candidates’ advertising. That is, the estimates show under what conditions the candidate lost or gained votes compared to those citizens whose vote did not change between May and July. Table 7 shows the results of the corresponding models.

The results are remarkably consistent regarding traditional media: radio, television and print. Models fail to report a statistically significant relationship between voter media consumption intensity and changes in voter preferences. In this sense, these results are also consistent with the broad literature that has found minimal or no effects between information sources and electoral preferences. The same could be said about social networks, if it were not for the visible relationship between their usage as a source of information and the change in preferences for Ricardo Anaya. However, the result is somewhat ambiguous, as it seems that the use of *Twitter* as a source of campaign information was associated with both favorable and adverse preferences for Anaya. These results are probably consistent with the nature of this network. As is well known, *Twitter* is a space where the greatest confrontation between opposing views occurs, some of them with the use of “professional” or even automated participants, the so-called bots.

This is a relevant finding that also brings into question the belief even expressed by López Obrador on several occasions about the positive role of social networks in his campaign. The results of the models reveal that there is no statistically significant relationship between the use of social networks as a source of information and the changes in preferences for López Obrador during the campaign.

To identify the possible effects of advertising on the change or stability of preferences, I ran multinomial logistic models where the dependent variable is the change or stability of preferences as described above and the independent variables are dichotomous variables that have the value of one if the interviewee recalled the candidate’s advertising and zero if he or she did not. The results can be seen in Table 8.

Advertising recollection does not show a statistically documentable relationship with the change or permanence of the voter’s preferences in the campaign either.

CONCLUSIONS

This article analyzed the relationship between media consumption and political ads recollection and vote during the 2018 presidential election in Mexico. Its main finding reveals that neither media consumption nor political advertising seemed to

TABLE 7. Intensity of media consumption and change in preferences between May and July. Multinomial logistic model. “No change” is the reference category

	Anaya		Meade		AMLO	
	B	Sig.	B	Sig.	B	Sig.
<i>The candidate lost preferences</i>						
Radio	-0.03	N.S.	-0.00	N.S.	-0.00	N.S.
Television	-0.00	N.S.	0.04	N.S.	-0.02	N.S.
Print	0.04	N.S.	0.02	N.S.	0.03	N.S.
Facebook	-0.07	N.S.	-0.04	N.S.	-0.05	N.S.
Twitter	0.17	***	0.01	N.S.	-0.08	N.S.
WhatsApp	-0.08	N.S.	0.05	N.S.	0.14	N.S.
Sex	-0.16	N.S.	-0.41	N.S.	0.23	N.S.
Age	0.02	N.S.	-0.23	N.S.	0.12	N.S.
SEL	0.16	***	0.04	N.S.	-0.14	**
Schooling	-0.12	***	-0.17	***	-0.13	**
Intercept	0.93	N.S.	1.67	**	-0.61	N.S.
<i>The candidate gained preferences</i>						
Radio	-0.00	N.S.	0.02	N.S.	-0.02	N.S.
Television	0.00	N.S.	0.10	N.S.	-0.04	N.S.
Print	0.07	N.S.	0.05	N.S.	0.06	N.S.
Facebook	-0.09	N.S.	-0.03	N.S.	-0.04	N.S.
Twitter	0.16	**	-0.03	N.S.	0.04	N.S.
WhatsApp	-0.03	N.S.	0.06	N.S.	-0.00	N.S.
Sex	-0.25	N.S.	-0.17	N.S.	-0.00	N.S.
Age	0.06	N.S.	-0.16	N.S.	-0.10	N.S.
SEL	0.30	***	0.08	N.S.	0.07	N.S.
Schooling	-0.02	N.S.	0.01	***	0.02	N.S.
Intercept	-0.50	N.S.	0.75	N.S.	-0.03	N.S.
N	476		424		675	
Pseudo R ²	0.10		0.07		0.06	

Source: National Electoral Study CIDE-CSES 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020).

TABLE 8. Advertisement recollection and change in preferences between May and July

	Anaya		Meade		AMLO	
	B	Sig.	B	Sig.	B	Sig.
<i>Lost preferences</i>						
Anaya ads	0.00	N.S.	-0.01	N.S.	-0.01	N.S.
Meade ads	-0.00	N.S.	0.00	N.S.	0.00	N.S.
AMLO ads	0.00	N.S.	0.00	N.S.	0.00	N.S.
Sex	-0.19	N.S.	-0.36	N.S.	0.22	N.S.
Age	0.06	N.S.	-0.21	N.S.	0.11	N.S.
SEL	0.16	***	0.04	N.S.	-0.13	**
Schooling	-0.13	***	-0.17	***	-0.11	N.S.
Intercept	0.79	N.S.	1.84	***	-0.60	N.S.
<i>Gained preferences</i>						
Anaya ads	0.01	N.S.	-0.01	N.S.	-0.00	N.S.
Meade ads	0.01	N.S.	-0.00	N.S.	-0.00	N.S.
AMLO ads	-0.01	N.S.	-0.00	N.S.	0.00	N.S.
Sex	-0.27	N.S.	-0.17	N.S.	-0.04	N.S.
Age	0.15	N.S.	-0.15	N.S.	-0.07	N.S.
SEL	0.32	***	0.08	0.22	0.07	N.S.
Schooling	-0.02	N.S.	0.01	0.71	0.02	N.S.
Intercept	-0.70	N.S.	1.41	***	0.14	N.S.
N	1 237		1 237		1 237	
Pseudo R ²	0.42		0.52		0.21	

Source: National Electoral Study CIDE-CSES 2018 (Beltrán, Ley and Castro Cornejo, 2020). *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

have a significant effect on the changes in preferences for any of the three major candidates. In this sense, this essay rules out the idea that the use of social networks was a decisive factor in the definition of voters' electoral preferences in the 2018 presidential election. The same holds for the voters' recollection of the candidates' political advertising. These findings go well with the academic literature claiming that the media has minimal or no effect on voter preferences—not only traditional media, but the so-called social networks as well. [B6](#)

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ANNEX

National Electoral Study CIDE-CSES 2018

Methodological Note

The services of the company Ipsos (<https://www.ipsos.com/es-mx>) were hired to carry out the panel.

Interviews were conducted to men and women over 18 years of age who were Mexican residents and who had voter credentials. For this purpose, the CIDE provided Ipsos with a nationally representative probability sample, following a phased sampling design using the latest list of electoral sections available as a framework. The sample selection method is described below.

Before starting the fieldwork, some sections where logistical difficulties were encountered (e.g., insecurity issues, weather, etc.) were replaced. The replacements were made under the same probabilistic selection methodology.

1. First survey (wave 1), from May 27 to June 4, 2018: In this first stage, 2 600 people were contacted. In the interview, all participants were asked if they would be willing to be interviewed again later in exchange for a MXN\$150.00 payoff. 1 540 people agreed.
2. Second survey (wave 2), from June 22 to 28, 2018: In this and the following wave, the 1 239 individuals recruited in the first wave were interviewed and given the proposed payoff.
3. Third survey (wave 3), from July 12 to 18, 2018: The same process described above (wave 2) was repeated and the same 1 239 interviews were obtained.
4. Fourth survey (wave 4), from January 26 to February 5, 2019: the same process described above (wave 2) was repeated, starting with the search for respondents who participated in the previous stages, managing to interview 1 018 panel participants, 66 per cent of the original sample.

Sample selection procedure: Surveys were conducted on a probability sample of electoral sections applying ten interviews per section. In order to have more precise estimates, a stratified sample was made by dividing the territory into four strata: *a*) states governed by the PAN, *b*) northern states governed by the PRI, *c*) southern states governed by the PRI and *d*) states governed by the PRD. Each stratum was in turn divided into strata of political competition according to the results of the 2015 federal deputy election. Within each stratum, sections (primary sampling units) were chosen through systematic sampling with probability proportional to section size (PPS), where size is defined by the 2015 nominal list.

Sections form clusters of individuals so the sampling corresponds to a multi-stage cluster sampling, where the primary sampling unit is the section, the secondary unit is the block, the third unit is the household and the final sampling unit is the interviewee. The electoral sections are chosen within each domain-stratum with probability proportional to the nominal list. Once the sections have been chosen, the selection of blocks and households is carried out during the fieldwork through systematic random sampling. In each section, the interviewer makes a list of the blocks that comprise it, assigning them a consecutive one from which he or she obtains the total number of blocks within the section (k). Within each section, two blocks must be chosen, so the interviewer divides the total number of blocks per section (k) by 2 to determine the “skip” between blocks. The interviewer then randomly chooses a number that is contained between 1 and the “skip” using a random number table and the number chosen is the first block to be selected. To choose the second block, the “skip” is added to the first number selected.

Once the blocks have been selected, we proceed to select the households. The process of selecting households is very similar to the one used to select the blocks. The interviewer lists all of the households on the block and divides the total by five (skips) since five households must be chosen on each block. Then the interviewer randomly chooses a number between 1 and the “skip” and that is the first household selected, the second household selected is the first number selected plus the skip, the third household is the second number selected plus the skip and so on for the fourth and fifth households.

The last stage of selection is that of the interviewee. In each home selected, the interviewer lists all the residents of the home with their respective birthday and chooses the person whose birthday is the most recent. In case the selected person is not home, the interviewer must conduct a checklist to contact the selected person, if the interview could not be conducted even with the checklist, then it is replaced with the adjacent household, moving clockwise.

Under this sampling scheme, all Mexican citizens have a non-zero and known probability of being selected. This constructed sample additionally allows us to generate precise estimates of the variables of interest, to make comparisons between subgroups of the population, to find out if there are differences between them and, above all, to formulate or verify hypotheses about their causes.

Given the sampling design, it is necessary to use expansion factors (π), which are calculated as the inverse probability of interviewee selection. Once the survey has been carried out, non-response adjustment factors are calculated, as well as adjustment factors for deviations from the population parameters of sex and age.

$$\pi = \frac{1}{P(\text{individual in sample})}$$

The sample size and design guarantee a 95 per cent confidence level and a theoretical margin of error (d) of ± 2.8 points overall.

The calculation of this margin of error is presented below.

$$\begin{aligned} d &= \sqrt{\left(\frac{t^2 * P(1-P) * efd}{n} \right) * 100} \\ &= \sqrt{\left(\frac{(1.96)^2 * 0.5(1-0.5) * 2}{2400} \right) * 100} \\ &= 2.8 \end{aligned}$$

Where,

d = the margin of error associated with the estimation of the proportion P .

p = the population parameter (proportion) that we seek to estimate. The calculation of the margin of error is made assuming a proportion of 0.5 because this is the value that maximizes the error, that is, any other proportion will have a smaller margin of error.

t = the percentile of the normal distribution associated with the desired confidence. A confidence level of 95 per cent is assumed for the calculation of the error.

N = sample size.

efd = design effect.

$$efd(\hat{p}) = \frac{V(\hat{p}) \text{ Under the sampling design}}{V(\hat{p}) = \text{ Under simple random sampling}}$$

$$V(\hat{p}) = \frac{N-n}{(N-1)(n-1)} pq$$

N : the size of the population.

n : the sample size.

p : proportion of interest

$q = 1 - p$

The design effect must be incorporated into the error calculation because it is a complex sampling scheme. On account of the clustering nature of the sampling (electoral sections), a design effect of approximately 2 is considered.