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# Congressional Campaigning in Mexico

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## Abstract

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*How has congressional campaigning changed during the transition to democracy in Mexico? To answer this question, I examined how both the hegemonic PRI and the weak opposition parties carried out electoral campaigns during the pre-competitive and competitive periods. To do this, I interviewed almost 50 deputy candidates from Mexico's three major parties, and found that during the hegemonic period, PRI candidates were responsible for running their campaigns in many districts because the sectors were far weaker than most analysts once thought. Competition has modernized campaigns, but not exactly in the same way as occurred in the U.S.*

## Resumen

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*¿Cómo se han transformado las campañas electorales durante la transición a la democracia en México? Para contestar esta pregunta, examiné la forma en la cual el PRI y los partidos de oposición manejaban sus campañas durante los periodos pre-competitivos y competitivos. Entrevisté casi 50 candidatos a diputados de los tres grandes partidos en México, y encontré que durante el periodo hegemónico, los candidatos del PRI en muchos distritos llevaron sus propias campañas sin la ayuda de los tres sectores del partido.*

*La competencia electoral ha tenido el efecto de modernizar a las campañas en México, pero no en la misma forma que en los E.U.A.*

## *Introduction*

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The focus of this paper are the changes in federal deputy campaigns carried out by the three major parties in Mexico, the National Action Party (PAN), the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), and the Party of the Institutional Revolution (PRI) between the 1970s and the present. The paper aims to understand how ambitious candidates and party leaders have reacted to increases in electoral competition, large amounts of public financing, mass media access, and greater obstacles to electoral fraud. Campaign strategies designed by candidates and party leaders for non-competitive conditions will not be the same as those that assure victories in Mexico's new democracy.

Federal deputy campaigns are an important issue to examine as a part of understanding Mexico's overall transition to democracy because their transformation can tell us much about the structure of competition at the local level, how parties have adapted to new competitive circumstances, and whether there is a new balance of power between individual politicians and their party leaders.

To understand changes in campaigns, one must focus on both pre and post-competitive eras. In the non-competitive environment that prevailed in Mexico until the early 1990s, there were great differences between the campaign activities carried out by the hegemonic PRI and those run by candidates from opposition parties. One would have expected the hegemonic PRI to run congressional campaigns that were heavily party based - that is, races that were managed, carried out, paid for, and monitored by the party's organization. Despite the first-past-the-post electoral system, the party controlled ballot access completely and the Mexican Constitution prohibits consecutive reelection to legislative posts. Although in many of the 300 single-member-districts electoral campaigns could be characterized as party based (see my definition below), in quite a few others, either the party's sectoral organizations were weak or the PRI governor's support for the candidate was low, so candidates were by and large responsible for running their own campaigns. This did not mean however, that candidates campaigned on their personal image, or that voters responded to this image, rather that the individual deputy hopeful was responsible for carrying out his electioneering activities, not the party.

Before the 1990s, the weak opposition parties largely ran minimalist campaigns using, in many cases, the voluntarist labor of friends and family. In most districts during the hegemonic era, the organizational structure of the opposition parties was largely unable to support the efforts of their candidates, who were left to organize their electoral attempts with their own resources. This paper will examine how the center-right PAN and the center-

left PRD (from its birth in 1989) modernized their campaigning over time to understand how democratization affected electioneering.

Competition had the effect of homogenizing electioneering efforts of the three parties, especially in the more competed districts. It also pushed both national party leaders and individual candidates from all three major parties to modernize campaigns; the effects of this modernization were far greater for the national party organization than they were for most individual candidates. Because the greater proportion of public campaign funding is funneled through the national party organizations, the means with which to modernize is monopolized in the highest reaches of the party bureaucracy. Because federal deputy candidates do not control important campaign resources and because they cannot run for reelection in the following term, they continue to carry out campaigns in a more traditional manner. There are, however, important exceptions to this general rule: in those districts that are highly competed, the national parties will channel extra resources that help finance more modern electioneering tools, such as mail mailings, phone banks, as well as radio and local television campaigns. This is also true in those in which the individual candidate can fund his own electoral effort.

### *Organization of Paper and Evidence*

This work will begin with a discussion of the paper's arguments and how they fit into the literature on campaigns. The third section will present a historical view of how the PRI and the opposition parties campaigned under non-competitive conditions, the following part examines the factors which have caused changes in campaign strategies and tactics, including rising electoral competition beginning with the "scare" of the 1988 elections, and the huge increases (and controls over the same) in public funding for campaigning activities of all the parties after 1996. Finally, the new style of campaigns will be examined in detail. The empirical evidence presented in this work are interviews with candidates - both those who won and lost their races - from the three parties. I have chosen party politicians who ran for the Lower House from rural and urban districts, and from competed and non-competed areas. Finally, I have also interviewed party leaders who were responsible for the parties' national strategies. Approximately 25 candidates from the hegemonic era and 30 from the democratic period were interviewed in all.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I could not use the Federal Electoral Institute's (IFE) spending data for congressional campaigns because when the parties report their expenses, they are allowed to distribute the total they receive from the IFE in the districts as they see fit. It is impossible to know how much the candidate in the district spent versus what the parties spent at the national level because these two totals are prorated and disaggregated at the district level.

## *The Argument*

Campaigns in democratic, representative regimes are designed to disseminate information to the electorate, to persuade, convince, and mobilize citizens to vote for a determinate candidate and/or party. Some authors argue that campaigns have little impact on the final results, stating that the two most important determinants of the vote are retrospective economic evaluations and partisan identification (Gelman and King 1993; Holbrook 1996). However, rational candidates and party leaders continue to spend millions of dollars on selling their images in an attempt to win votes. Scholars have noted that if only retrospective voting and partisan identification shaped the vote, there should be no fluctuations in aggregate preferences during the campaign season, which is empirically not the case (Holbrook 1996). Campaigns are seen as cognitive short cuts that produce huge amounts of information about the candidates, their images, their backgrounds, and their future projects (Popkin 1991). Campaigns can make a difference at the margin if there are large enough numbers of voters whose partisan identification is weak, or a large number of citizens who are not yet mobilized to vote.

In party-centered campaigns in single member district electoral systems, the party is responsible for basic electoral tasks, using its party workers to communicate with and mobilize the electorate, select the candidates, and pay for their campaigns (Agranoff 1974; Herrnson 1989; Souraf 1980; Wattenberg 1982 and 1990). In candidate-centered campaigns, the individual politician runs his race based on his image, he is responsible for his strategy; he hires his own election staff, he largely finances his campaign, hires opinion-polling experts, conducts direct mailings, and decides how he will approach the voter.<sup>2</sup> Party organization at all levels becomes oriented toward providing services for individual candidates (Aldrich (1995).

Mexico's federal congress is bicameral, with 500 representatives in the Lower House and 128 in the Senate. Of the 500 congressional seats, 300 are single-member-district and the remaining 200 are proportional representation (PR) seats selecting in five regional districts comprising a closed list of 40 candidates each. The PR tally is allotted from the regional total of the plurality vote, not through a separate ballot. Despite the majority component of the mixed majority/PR electoral system in Mexico, there were few if any incentives to cultivate a personal vote, especially under non-competitive conditions, because of the non-consecutive reelection clause of the Mexican

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<sup>2</sup> Candidate centered campaigns have to sell the candidates to a wide group of potential supporters who not necessarily loyal members of the party. Creating and managing the candidate's image is now the base of campaigns, with television being the most important component of selling this image. "Campaigns are now the episodic organizations of professionals and experts that political parties once were." (Hrebennar, Burbank, and Benedict 1999, 6).

Constitution.<sup>3</sup> Even in first-past-the-post districts, voters largely respond to party labels because the candidates themselves serve for three years and are never heard from again.<sup>4</sup> Elected politicians cannot enhance their individual careers by complying with their campaign promises in Congress. There are few gains to investing in name recognition or for delivering public services. For the PR deputies, the incentives against a personal vote are even stronger. The list seats make up 40 percent of the Chamber of Deputies and deputies from this category are selected from five regional districts made up of a 40-member closed list, making it impossible for the voters to order their preferences. The parties largely control the access and the order to the PR lists (called plurinominals in Mexico).

Without a personal vote, and with little to no electoral pressures, one would expect to see the parties' structure in the districts to run the campaigns (as was seen in the US case until after World War II), especially for the PRI because it was the party that held executive power, that had a massive national and local organization that supposedly mobilized millions of Mexican, and that enjoyed a monopoly of government resources to support its campaigns. In other words, the lack of incentives to cultivate a personal vote should have meant the party was responsible for the tasks of electioneering. Yet, as this paper will show, this was not always the case. While individual PRI candidates might not have gained from organizing their own campaign activities, they were often obliged to do so, due to the patchwork nature of the party's organization and its internal conflicts. In majority districts in which one of the PRI's three sectors had a presence or in which the sitting PRI governor was able to place an ally, the candidate relied on the work of the sector or group to organize the campaign. In those districts in which no sector had a strong presence or in which the governor was weak or did not support the candidate in question, the individual PRI politician was forced by his party to campaign using his own time and organizational skills. The Mexican example shows us that while individual politicians may not have incentives to cultivate a personal vote, they might still have to run a candidate based campaign, in the sense that they carry out electioneering activities, not that they run their appeals based on their image.

For the opposition parties, much as was to be expected, party structure was weak or non-existent in most districts, especially outside of the cities. In these cases, the candidates ran short campaigns with their own resources, using the voluntary labor of family and friends. In districts that comprised the medium to larger cities, by the 1980s at least, opposition parties had begun to grow. Once they did, party activists helped pay for different aspects of the

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<sup>3</sup> See Shugart and Carey (1994) for the determinants of a party versus candidate vote.

<sup>4</sup> In a 1997 post-election poll (Encuesta Nacional de Actitudes), only 11.6 percent of the poll's respondents report ever having any contact with their federal deputies.



electoral campaign and organize events. The campaigns of the opposition parties were pale shadows of the PRI's coverage and organization.

In this paper, we are interested in how an external transformation in the political environment—rising levels of electoral competition— affects the types of campaigns that are run. Most authors in the US case argue that technological change after World War II was the major factor in transforming American campaigns (Hrebentar, Burbank, and Benedict 1999; Reichley 1992; Wattenberg 1982).<sup>5</sup> Television allowed candidates to communicate directly with voters, rendering the parties' armies of volunteer activists who once communicated with and mobilized voters less important. However, in Mexico, the introduction of new technologies (television, data-base management, mass mailings) was not the trigger for the change from more party to more candidate-based campaigns; television was available for decades but was largely unused by individual candidates. Rather, increases in electoral competition and new electoral rules that allow for fair and well-funded campaigns gave both candidates and parties new incentives to use these tools to win elections. We should also begin to see more professionalization on the part of both the candidates and the national leadership, despite the lack of consecutive reelection, because of these same pressures.

Under competitive circumstances, our expectations for campaigning under a mixed single-member-district/proportional representation system with no consecutive reelection should change. Three factors are responsible for these changes: first, rising electoral competition that makes a larger number of districts competitive; second, the infusion of public money into congressional races; and third, the reduction of massive fraud that marred electoral results during much of the hegemonic period, but especially in the 1980s. These factors affected the campaign strategies employed by *both* the national party leadership and the individual candidates. First, and most importantly, the three parties now exhibit very similar campaign tactics and strategies; they have almost standardized their electioneering in response to competition at the ballot box. Second, campaigns across the board have become far more modernized as all parties, not just the PRI, gained access to public financing. Much of this money has been spent in modern mass media appeals that focus on paid television spots, and now the three major parties all rely on national media appeals to bolster their congressional electoral results. The parties continue to concentrate their media appeals at the national levels, despite growing evidence that local factors play a large role in federal legislative outcomes.

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<sup>5</sup> Wattenberg writes that with the development of the candidate-centered mass media campaign, long-term party loyalties have atrophied substantially (1990, 148). That is, the causal line runs from changes in campaigns to declining party identification, not the reverse.

Third, all the candidates, including those from the PRI, have become more active in their own campaigning and have begun to employ variegated strategies both among districts, and within districts. In fully competed, urban districts, we find candidates employing more modern media appeals that include both electioneering technologies, such as opinion polling, radio addresses, and mass-mailings, and groups targeting. In rural districts, especially those that are not under competitive pressure, however, campaigns are strikingly similar to those run twenty years ago. Within each district, a sub-set of the district - the precinct (or section as it is known in Mexico) has become the basis of different strategies that are employed to reach different types of voters. Candidates now use highly disaggregated electoral tactics based on the type of sections: wealthy/poor; competed/non-competed; urban/rural - that make up their districts. Door-to-door canvassing, long considered an old-fashioned electioneering tool in the US because of its labor intensive nature, has become far more popular in Mexico in the competitive era.

### *Campaigns before Competition*

#### *The PRI*

The PRI's organization was divided into the sectoral and territorial structures. The sectors are made up of the Worker, Peasant, and Popular peak-level associations, which in turn are broken down into many different unions, some in localities, and others in industries (Hansen 1970; Cline 1962; Padgett 1966). The territorial structure of the party was constructed around the different levels of government: municipal, state, and national. Many had argued that the sectors were allotted a certain number of representatives in Congress because of the work their members did during election time.<sup>6</sup> Former leader of the PRI, Humberto Roque Villanueva states that when the candidate coincided with the sector that owned the district, that candidate would receive a great deal of support in terms of money and volunteers for voter mobilization.<sup>7</sup> Against all expectations and academic literature on the subject (Scott 1964, Needler 1971; Hansen 1971), in many districts, the PRI's sectoral organizations were weak, and could not be expected to run congressional campaigns every three years.

One could also assume that where the sectors were weaker, the territorial structure would do a great deal of campaign work precisely because of its privileged position "on the ground", that is, in the districts, the municipalities, and in the state at large. However, many federal deputies

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Claudia Esqueda, April 29, 2002, and Heladio Ramírez. See Javier Hurtado (1993).

<sup>7</sup> Interview, November 17, 2003.

remark that the territorial structure of the party (the district committee and the sectional committees) in many districts and municipalities within the district was by and large abandoned between elections, with little or no money, physical headquarters, or leadership.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the candidate himself had to remake the territorial structure of the party when he ran for office in that district. Fausto Zapata states "The first job to do so that things worked out was to construct the municipal and sectional committees."<sup>9</sup> This fact points out the general weakness of the PRI's territorial structure. Although no other party could come close to competing with the official party's geographical coverage of its organization, it was surprisingly sparse in terms of a permanent presence, especially in more rural areas.<sup>10</sup> It was in effect, cheaper and more efficient to have the candidates to do the work of campaigning in those areas that did not have a strong sectoral or territorial presence.

The difference in the territorial strength of the PRI seems to lie in whether the governor<sup>11</sup> was politically powerful or effective in his entity, in which case he funneled funds through the municipal committees and kept them working politically and whether he supported the candidate the CEN had sent down, in which case, he allowed the PRI mayors to support the federal deputy campaigns with resources and man-power.<sup>12</sup> Along with the sectors, the PRI's governors were crucial players in the congressional campaigns in the districts in which they were able to place allies, and used their influence over mayors and the local party organization to assure local logistical support for PRI legislative candidates. If the governor did not support a particular candidate, he would block the efforts of the PRI candidate, for example, by paying the local press to attack him.<sup>13</sup>

This leads one to the realization that simply because the PRI deputy candidates came from the same party, the sectors or governor would not automatically support the candidate sent down to the district. The enormous amount of intra-party conflict over PRI candidate selection had serious repercussions for campaigning.

To demonstrate the different levels of strength and weakness of the sectors and the governors at the district level under hegemonic conditions, I have constructed a map of district ownership. We know from the interviews that where a sector was strong and where a governor placed his favorites, the campaign was largely party-based, although the candidate was certainly

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<sup>8</sup> Socorro Díaz agrees with this assessment.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with author, April 11, 2000.

<sup>10</sup> A leader of the state PRI of Jalisco stated that in many rural municipalities in the state, they had no idea who the militants were, and it was even difficult at times to find the municipal PRI headquarters. Interview with Carlos Sepulvera, former local deputy and member of the CDE, April 17, 1997, Guadalajara, Jalisco.

<sup>11</sup> There were no opposition governors in Mexico until the PAN won its first in 1989.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Fausto Zapata, April 11, 2000.

<sup>13</sup> Interviews with Ing. García Leal, April 29, 2002 and with Socorro Díaz, April, 2002.

involved. In contrast, those districts that did not have a strong sectoral presence or where the governors were not active in placing their allies, the candidates ran their own campaigns (again, recognizing that their candidate image was not the central element of voter choice). The table below is constructed using biographical data from three electoral periods, 1982, 1985, and 1988, when the PRI still enjoyed electoral triumphs in most of the 300 majority districts. If a sectoral leader or gubernatorial ally won the candidacy for a specific district at least two of these three elections, then that sector or group is considered the "owner" of the district.

TABLE 1

**PRI SECTORS' AND GROUPS' OWNERSHIP OF DISTRICTS OVER THREE ELECTORAL CYCLES, 1982-1991**

SECTOR OR GROUP	2/3*	3/3*	ALL <sup>o</sup>	SUB TOTAL	% OF TOTAL
WORKERS	30	15	11	56	
PEASANT	15	6	3	24	
POPULAR	11	1	0	12	
TOTAL: OWNED SECTORAL DISTRICTS				92/293	32
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT	23	4	6	33	(11)
STATE GOVT OR GOVERNOR	44	17	5	66	(23)
TOTAL: OWNED NON-SECTORAL DISTRICTS				99/293	34
TOTAL % OF "OWNED" DISTRICTS				191/293	66
TOTAL % OF "UNOWNED" DISTRICTS+				98/293	34
MISSING OBSERVATIONS				4	
TOTAL NUMBER OF DISTRICTS				293	100

Table elaborated by author from professional profiles taken from *El diccionario biográfico del gobierno mexicano*, eds. 1, 2, and 3.

\*2/3 and 3/3 refers to the number of elections in which the sector or group was able to place one its own candidate in a particular district out of the three elections for which information is available.

<sup>o</sup> In some cases, information was available for only two of the three electoral cycles, so if a sector held two of the three in these instances, it was labelled all.

+ Unowned districts refer to districts in which there was a different sector or groups winning the candidacy for each of the three elections.

From this table, we see that in many districts in the 1980s, only 32 percent of the districts in the 1980s were “owned” by one of the three sectors of the PRI, and therefore provided party-based organizational support to the candidates’ campaigns.<sup>14</sup> The governors were able to win candidacies for their personal supporters in the Lower House in 23 percent of the 300 districts over time, which brings the total of more party-oriented districts to 55 percent. The rest were divided among those that were owned by non-sectoral groups, such as the federal government or no group in particular (45 percent in all). In the districts in which the federal government was able to place its members, the sectors were relatively inactive, and the governor in question could remain relatively uninvolved.<sup>15</sup> These numbers explain why some candidates interviewed insisted they had performed many important campaign tasks, while in others, the sectors or the mayors (via the governors) were identified as the primary agents in the campaigns.

To sum up this section, it is worth reviewing different indicators of party versus candidate-based campaigns. Under non-competitive conditions, the PRI’s national party leadership and the governors financed campaigns, and chose candidates to run in them. In districts in which a sector was active, both mobilization and communication tasks were in large part done by PRI activists and volunteers provided by the group, otherwise the candidate would be responsible for them. If the governor were an effective political force and backed the candidate, then he would also provide resources and manpower; if not, the candidate would again lead his own mobilization and communication efforts. Many of these indicators would change with competitive elections and campaign reform.

### Different Aspects of PRI Campaigning Under Non-Competitive Conditions

At the district level, the PRI candidates tended not to offer differentiated issue platforms designed to deal with local problems, at least in their campaign propaganda. Schmitt reports for the 1967 mid-term congressional elections in the state of Yucatán that PRI candidates had three main messages: 1) the general accomplishments of the PRI up to that point; 2) the PRI as the only true party of the Mexican Revolution; 3) the incapability of the other parties to govern.<sup>16</sup> Because “issues” were so vague; candidates were not required to develop their own stands on various problems of the day, such as the banking crisis, inflation, and unemployment. Both retrospective and

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<sup>14</sup> The popular sector was the most amorphous of the three. In the graph only those leaders from the FSTSE (bureaucrats), SNTE (teachers), or CNPP (small property owners) were included.

<sup>15</sup> Interviews with Zapata and Medina.

<sup>16</sup> Schmitt (1970, 100 and 106). This information was corroborated with newspaper coverage much later. In the 1982 congressional campaigns in the state of Jalisco, much the same appeals were made. *El Informador*, June 27, 1982, 3-A.

prospective appeals were vague. PRI congressional candidates offered to act as brokers between the voter and the decision-making or resource rich agencies at all levels of government, from local and state governments to the national bureaucracy. Candidates did not as such “run” on local issues; rather, they promised to act as intermediaries so that weak constituents could gain access to local services.

In terms of candidate-voter contact, there were two basic methods in the hegemonic context: first, mass rallies and second, small group meetings. Mass rallies were the most famous element of the campaign. Depending on whether a sector or governor was strong in the district, these open-air meetings were organized by the candidate’s team (comprised of friends and family, or hired students) with the help of members of the territorial structure.<sup>17</sup> If there were a sector in the district, or if the governor were active, they would also participate in organizing the larger events.

The real alliance building took place in much smaller meetings with leaders of the relevant groups within the district. The purpose of these meetings was for local leaders to meet the candidate and externalize their demands and problems. Such groups included industrialists, professionals, and businessmen who were neither strong numerically nor incorporated in a sector. This type of meeting, according to Hector Hugo Olivares, was important in constructing what he calls “a network of agreements” (*una red de compromisos*).

The advertising campaign included the famous painted walls (*bardas*), flyers with the candidate’s name, and interviews with both radio and newspapers. The PRI candidates had enormous advantages in terms of communication. Because the candidate had more money than his opposition rival, he could pay for low-cost advertising, such as posters and billboards, and because he was a member of the dominant party, the newspapers and radio by and large only covered PRI candidates, ignoring opposition rivals. The legendary *bardas* were an important element of the struggle to reach voters in the absence of more modern forms of communication. These *bardas* were painted using the labor of the candidate’s personal team or sectoral volunteers.<sup>18</sup> Because opposition parties often had no other form of reaching voters with the names and colors of their parties, there were conflicts that could become ugly over who had the right to paint where.

An important difference between hegemonic and competitive campaigns was the lack of expensive media appeals under non-competitive conditions, which made campaigns relatively inexpensive. One had to pay for the flyers, the trucks and campaign team, and the food and drink for those who assisted

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with Luís Medina, October 2001. Dulce María Sauri, federal deputy from 1982-1985 reports that the sectors were an important element in getting people to the mass rallies (ellos nutraron las reuniones). Interview, September 10, 2003. Jorge Alonso agrees with this assessment, 1987, p. 86.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Dulce María Sauri, September 10, 2003.

the mass rallies; but one didn't have to finance radio or newspaper advertisements.<sup>19</sup> According to interviews, the CEN of the PRI did not pay a great deal of the costs of local campaigning, but rather the governors took up a good amount of the slack, or in sectoral districts, the organizations supported the candidate with campaign resources and manpower.<sup>20</sup>

The candidates were also responsible for voter mobilization in non-sectoral districts; hiring buses and cars and feeding voters was their responsibility. In addition, the candidate (or sectors in their districts) was in charge of finding and placing party representatives for the voting stations. All parties had the right to have a representative present at the polling booths; however, only the PRI was able to provide this coverage, an enormous advantage in terms of the capacity to "protect" their votes.

### The Role of the PRI's National Party Organization

The national leadership of the PRI was responsible for monitoring the campaigns of its candidates, and sanctioning those who were not campaigning properly.<sup>21</sup> In the campaigns that were concurrent with the presidential contest, the national organization was far more active in assuring that the different elements of the party structure were mobilized for fear of looking incompetent in front of the PRI's presidential candidate, and therefore the future president of the nation. In terms of monitoring from the national level, campaign evaluations often took the form of asking the candidate how many lunches he had organized and attended.<sup>22</sup> This seemed to be the true measure of how to reach the voters, the sectoral leaders, and the community's notables. The CEN kept tabs on the performance of its candidates via a hierarchy of delegates and the state party leadership.<sup>23</sup> A regional delegate monitored up to five states, the state delegate kept up with the activities of the candidates in each federal entity, and the CEN's delegate was the major link between the candidate and the national party. If the district was considered vulnerable, then a special delegate was sent down to manage the campaign.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> One federal campaigner did state that it was necessary to pay unofficial money to newspapers to get them to cover the PRI candidate's campaign.

<sup>20</sup> Roque Villanueva (November 17, 2003) reports that the CEN paid approximately 10 percent of the congressional costs. Dulce María Sauri reports that the sectors helped pay for her campaign, one that was not that expensive because of the lack of media appeals. September 10, 2003. Jorge Sandoval, (May 22, 2002) stated that the CEN paid for part of the campaign, the governor, and the candidate himself. In cases in which the candidate is not supported by the governor, he had to self-finance the campaign, interview with Ing. García Leal, April 29, 2002.

<sup>21</sup> There were complaints that PRI deputy candidates who had close ties to national figures were not required to campaign because "they were busy in Mexico City".

<sup>22</sup> Interview with María de las Heras, November 22, 2001.

<sup>23</sup> Interviews with Dulce María Sauri, September 10, 2003, and with Luís Medina, 2000.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Roque Villanueva, November 17, 2003.

In the non-competitive era, the national party did not have to organize or pay for national media appeals. Paid television advertising was not used in campaigns; rather, nightly news programs covered the president's actions: there was no explicit television advertising campaign that sought to sway the voters to the PRI's candidates. By the 1985 elections, there was also an attempt to distribute information packets to each congressional candidate. This information comprised two categories: the first was a general outline of the economic policies of the de la Madrid administration, and the second was information detailing the district at hand - its former voting record, local problems, and neighborhood leaders.<sup>25</sup>

### *Opposition Party Congressional Campaigns*

In the great majority of single member districts under hegemonic conditions in Mexico, the opposition parties had very little party organization to support their federal congressional campaigns. Although the center-right PAN, the small left parties through the 1980s, and the PRD after its birth in 1989, nominated candidates for the Lower House, in many instances they were phantom candidacies without campaigns.<sup>26</sup> The opposition tended to have stronger organization in the urban areas, and as Mexico urbanized between 1950 and 1990, the opposition parties slowly found more support in the cities, especially among those citizens whose livelihoods were not directly dependent on government largesse, contracts, or contacts.

Opposition campaigning styles can be distinguished between those that were carried out in districts with some party organization and those that were not, the latter being the majority of cases up until at least the early 1990s. In districts with little to no party structure, the candidates carried out minimalist campaigns that were not full time operations, but at times weekend stints that coexisted with the individual politicians other professional obligations. The campaigns consisted of two parts, the more urban element and the rural component. To appeal to rural voters, the candidate and his small team of friends and family drove down the district's paved highway, stopping at the road side villages, and handing out flyers to the inhabitants. At least one car would have a loud-speaker attached to the roof with music and a short political message. During these stops, the candidate and his team might try to conduct home visits, which were oftentimes repulsed because of the neighbors' fear of being seen talking to an opposition candidate. In more urban areas, the candidate would hold small rallies in plazas or parks. Conducting the rally in a spot where people were

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<sup>25</sup> *El Nacional*, February 14, 1985, and *El Universal*, March 19, 1985, p. 21.

<sup>26</sup> At times, the smaller parties would register a candidate, knowing that at least some people would vote for the non-PRI alternative, but the candidate would not carry out any campaign whatsoever.



already congregating for another reason gave the impression of greater numbers, and therefore, greater support.<sup>27</sup>

The proto-campaign propaganda tactics consisted of flyers, some posters hung from posts, and a few meters of painted walls. The most important means of reaching the voters were rallies and some meetings with sympathetic neighbors. No newspapers or radio would even cover their campaigns, and many would not accept paid insertions in their pages. Communication with voters was often fraught with conflict as *priistas* chased off opposition campaign teams, turned on the municipal palace's speakers on full volume during their rallies, or fired off pistols to scare them off. The candidates paid for their own campaign expenses, which usually consisted of a few cars, food for the team, paper for printing flyers, and gasoline.<sup>28</sup>

In the late 1980s and 1990s, as the opposition's party structure grew, the local activists were willing and able to organize small home visits with 10 to 15 neighbors to meet and greet the candidate. The party's district supporters were able to set up rallies with greater anticipation (although they were still very small as compared to the PRI's massive events). The candidate could now show up and use his message to motivate both the party's activists and potential voters. Oftentimes, the campaign's aim was not necessarily to win the election, but to improve the party's vote and share and strengthen the organization of the party for future races. In districts with stronger party organization, the candidates did nothing dramatically different, but they could depend on the work of activists and sympathizers to help pay for the campaign (usually in-kind contributions) and expect that the activists would organize some of their events for them.

### *Fraud*

No discussion of campaigns under PRI hegemony could be complete without mentioning electoral fraud. Electoral fraud took several different forms. Jorge Castañeda (1991) has divided them into direct vote fraud, such as stealing votes and stuffing ballot boxes, and indirect fraud, characterized by the one-sided use of political and human resources of the state in favor of the hegemonic party. The author argues that the first was losing ground to the second by the 1980s. The first kind of fraud was characterized by a fascinating and original array of tricks: the "flying brigades" of PRI activists who drove around the district voting illegally in different polling stations, "impregnated" ballot boxes filled with false ballots, dead people who voted, and the physical destruction of ballots for opposition candidates (Eisenstadt 2003). The voting

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<sup>27</sup> Interview with a former PAN federal deputy candidate, Teófilo Arreola, February, 2005 and current PAN deputy Julian Angulo, February 23, 2005, who worked on several PAN campaigns in the 1980s and early 1990s.

<sup>28</sup> The PAN did not accept public money for campaigns or party organization until 1989.

lists were the responsibility of the Federal Electoral Commission (which fell under the control of the Secretary of *Gobernación*, an enormous advantage for the PRI regime, who was at the same time a participant and judge of the elections). Most experts agree that for several decades the PRI engaged more in padding their vote totals rather than in actively stealing opposition ballots, although that certainly existed. Some speculate that they did this to increase their totals to show the PRI's leadership their mobilization skills.<sup>29</sup> Only the PRI, because of its candidates, was able to man the voting booths (*casillas*) across the nation. This coverage was difficult for the opposition parties to match until well into the 1990s. The PRI-Executive control over electoral institutions became a central issue in the post-1988 negotiations of the electoral laws (Ricardo Becerra and Pedro Salazar 1998, 48).

### *Changes to the Competitive Environment, 1980s and 1990s*

The 1988 federal elections were a rude awakening for the political regime's elite: Presidential candidate Carlos Salinas Gortari was almost defeated by a traitorous *ex-priista*, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, who left the PRI and was able to unite the fractious leftist parties and several non-governmental organizations around the banner of the National Democratic Front (or FDN) (Bruhn 1997; Langston 2002). Salinas was not the only one to receive a rough jolt from the voters: the PRI's falling number of majority victories and its 51.1 percent of the national vote total in the congressional race put it closer than it had ever been to losing its 70 year old majority in the lower house of Congress. Salinas and his political team believed that the sectors' candidates (basically, the Workers), which for several decades had won quotas of power in the Lower House of Congress for their work in mobilizing the masses and repressing strikes and wage demands, were to blame for their inability to mobilize their members and control their vote (Guadalupe Pacheco 1997; Bruhn 1997).

Three major changes to the electoral environment would transform congressional campaigning in Mexico, both for the hegemonic PRI and the opposition parties. First, electoral competition rose at a prodigious rate throughout the 1990s (with the exception of the 1991 mid-term congressional races). Second, gross fraud is gradually brought under control through negotiated electoral reforms, and finally, the opposition parties benefited from a massive infusion of public money into elections that at least minimized the stupendous resource differentials between the PRI and the opposition.<sup>30</sup> These factors forced the PRI to compete on a more level playing field, which in turn changed the way its candidates waged campaign battles.

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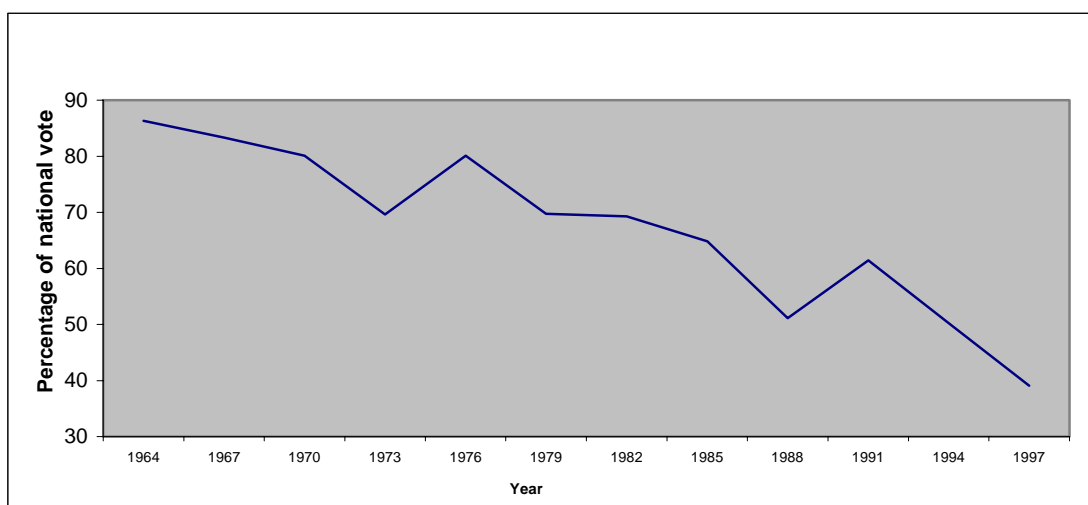
<sup>29</sup> One PRI leader noted that it was considered bad form for congressional candidates to win more votes in their district than the presidential candidate in concurrent elections. Interview with a former CEN leader, September, 2003.

<sup>30</sup> For more on the electoral reforms, see Becerra, Salazar, and Woldenberg (1997) and Eisenstadt (2003).

In this graph, we see the fall in the PRI's national vote for the Congress. Although the change was neither automatic nor constant, Mexican voters after 1988 were simply more willing to reject PRI candidates in deputy elections (Klesner 1997).

GRAPH 1

THE PRI'S NATIONAL VOTE FOR THE LOWER HOUSE OF CONGRESS, 1976-2000



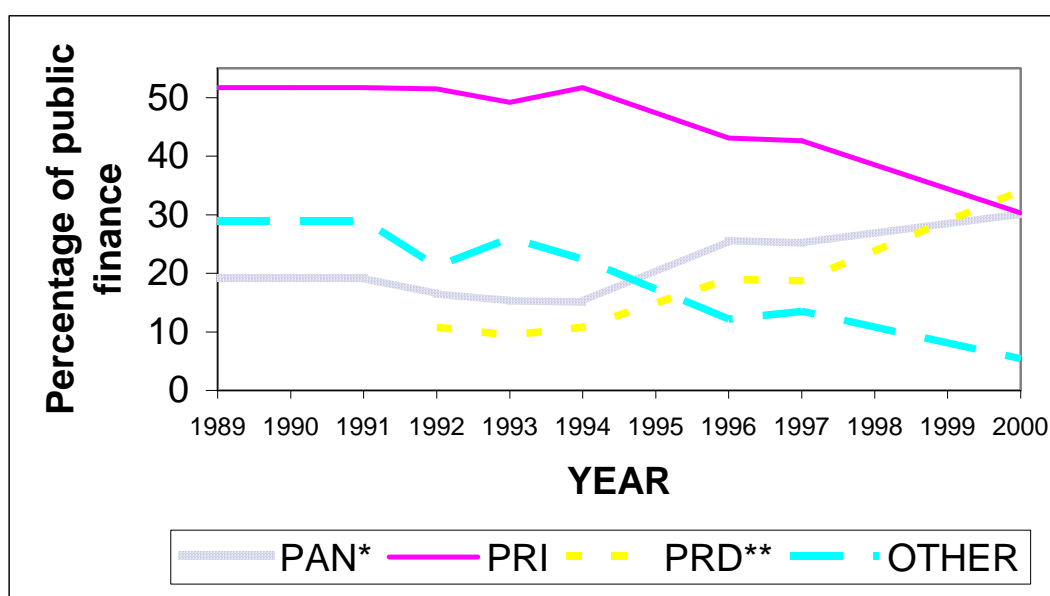
A series of electoral reforms in the 1990s culminated in the (at least until today) definitive 1996 reform that created the autonomous Federal Electoral Institute (IFE), which, for the first time since 1946, was *not* headed up by the Secretary of *Gobernación*, a keystone of the PRI government. The successful attempt to make the IFE autonomous had begun with the 1994 reform in which "(t)he composition of the General Council was changed in order to give a majority, in theory, to a group of six 'citizen councilors'" (Jean-Francois Prud'home (1998: 149). The citizen councilors and the representatives for the registered political parties were allowed to vote in the General Council or governing body of the IFE, not the Secretary of *Gobernación*.

The 1996 reforms to the Constitution also dealt with the financing of party activities (De Swaan, Martorelli and Molinar 1998: 159). Public money would be given to all registered parties, 70 percent of which would be distributed based on the party's last electoral performance, and 30 percent would be given in equal measure to all the parties (De Swaan, Martorelli, and Molinar (1998: 161). According to the Mexican Constitution, public funding of campaigns (through the IFE) must be greater than private funding. Private "sympathizers" of a party can donate up to ten percent of the *total public financing* for all parties in that campaign period. Then, party militants and

groups can give up to, but not exceeding, the party's public financing.<sup>31</sup> Other important reforms that strengthened the credibility of electoral outcomes were those lowering the legal limit on campaigning spending to an amount that parties other than the PRI might actually have a possibility of spending, unlike in the case of 1994, in which the limit on spending was so high, there was effectively no limit.<sup>32</sup>

GRAPH 2

PERCENTAGE OF PUBLIC FINANCING FOR THE THREE MAJOR PARTIES, 1989-2000.



\* PAN 2000 figures include its alliance partner, PVEM; \*\*PRD figure for 2000 includes PT, PAS, PSN. Figures taken from the *Memorias del Proceso Federal Electoral*, and IFE's web page: [www.ife.org.mx](http://www.ife.org.mx)

In 1994 elections, the PRI received over 50 percent of the official public funds for campaigns (and spent a far higher amount). By the 1997 elections, which were held under the new 1996 guidelines, the PRI received only 41 percent of the total public spending allotted to campaigns, the PAN 25 percent and the PRD a very respectable 19 percent. Institutional provisions that created

<sup>31</sup> If 1000 dollars is given to all parties for the campaign, and 600\$ of public financing goes to Party X, then 10% of the overall total - \$100 can be donated to Party X's campaign by party sympathizers, and \$499 can be given to the party by its militants (adding up to \$599, one dollar less than the public money going to that particular party). Interview with Alonso Lujambio, former Consejero of the IFE, November 14, 2003. See also the *Código federal de instituciones y procedimientos electorales* (1996), especially Titulo tercero: De las prerrogativas, acceso a la radio y televisión y financiamiento de los partidos políticos, pp. 37-60.

<sup>32</sup> De Swaan, Martorelli and Molinar 1998: 164 point out that while in 1994, the average public funding for each party was 40.3 million pesos, the limit on election spending was 1.5 billion pesos (p. 164). This limit obviously was to the PRI's favor as they could argue that no matter what they spent, it was legal.

offices within IFE designed to monitor campaign spending backed up the spending limits. Each party must now send detailed reports of their spending activities several times a year, which are audited by accountants within IFE.<sup>33</sup>

Once all the parties began to receive large quantities of public money for their campaign activities, mass media, especially paid promotional spots in television became an important electioneering tool. It is important to note that because the leaders of the three major parties negotiated the 1996 reform, all had incentives to maintain control of the party financing at the national level. This has had a strong impact on campaigning styles. Between 1994 and 1997, there was a 500 percent rise in the amount of public financing for parties. In 1994, the parties received 19.6 percent of what they would spend in 1997.<sup>34</sup>

There are two different kinds of mass media appeals: paid spots and unpaid coverage in the news broadcasts. As mentioned above, under the hegemonic regime, the PRI had such control over the television monopoly TELEVISIA that the regular nightly news (broadcast nationally) functioned as an unpaid campaign commercial for the party and its candidates (Chappell Lawson 2001, 5). Thus, to compete with the PRI the opposition parties had to break through a number of obstacles. First, they had to force TELEVISIA (and later TV Azteca) to include opposition party campaign activity on national news programs. Second, the television programs had to be obliged to produce more balanced coverage, and finally, the opposition had to gain access to state resources (which of course the PRI already enjoyed) to pay for television and radio spots promoting their candidates. The 1996 reforms forced both Televisa and TV Azteca to produce balanced coverage and access to mass media.<sup>35</sup>

Public campaign funds are channeled through the party leadership from the autonomous Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) to the candidates, allowing the CEN to retain a large percentage of this money. Most candidates for legislative posts used to depend almost exclusively on party funds to win elections, rather than individual or political action committee donations.

### ***The Transformation of the Congressional Campaigns in the Competitive Era***

During the 1970s and 1980s, many American scholars argued that the US parties were becoming obsolete because they had lost control over candidate selection at the turn of the Twentieth Century and after World War II, had surrendered their central role in campaigns (Agranoff 1976; Ceasar 1984;

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<sup>33</sup> For more on these procedures, see the *Código federal*, *op. cit.* and the web page of the IFE: ife.org.mx.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Ricardo Becerra, IFE, June 9, 1997.

<sup>35</sup> Put in the section of the 1996 reform covering this.

Wattenberg 1990). Smith (2004, 2) writes of the new style of modern campaign, one in which television, market research, and the tools of commercial advertising, are employed by campaign professionals who are increasingly specialized. This modern electioneering has replaced or sharply undercut the traditional campaigns that were carried out with a large number of volunteers on voters with stable partisan identities, through personal contact by party activists. Many other scholars answered that the electoral tasks carried out by the parties during campaigns continued to be important and far from dying out, parties, especially at the local level, were becoming even stronger (Cotter, *et al.* 1984; Herrnson 1988). Gerber and Green (2000) found that personal canvassing has a marked effect on increasing voter turnout, higher than direct mail or telephone contact (two more "modern" communication tactics) while Huckfeldt and Sprague (1992) argue that party organization at the local level, including door-to-door canvassing carried out by party activists, increases voter mobilization.

Mexico's changing campaigns have created a sort of laboratory setting in which we can see how parties, both their candidates and national leaders, in a specific institutional setting, react to a sharp exogenous shock, in this case, fast rising levels of electoral competition. Some have argued that professionalization of campaigns is the result of both party decline and an exogenous shock: technological innovation (Green and Smith 2003, 324). The authors go on to argue that in some European democracies, the national party headquarters became stronger as it modernized advertising appeals because it could reach voters without relying on local party activists (2003, 323).

In the Mexican case, the flow of money, together with electoral rules, seems to be determining how parties react to a more competitive environment. The relevant electoral rules in this case are the prohibition of consecutive re-election, and the bifurcated system of representation that divides the Lower House into both SMD and PR seats. Under a simple SMD system with consecutive re-election, one could have expected that with the onslaught of democratization, congressional campaigns in Mexico would begin to resemble their American counterparts: modern, media driven events that are heavily dependent on the ability of the candidate to sell his image. While one does see more candidate-based campaigning in SMD, the electioneering efforts are still based on (paid) man-power with much direct contact between deputy hopeful and voter. At the national level, however, electoral pressures and the money to pay for new technologies have caused a push toward both modernization, and to a greater degree, the centralization of media appeals. Parties do not want to relinquish the authority that the control of campaign finance gives them, nor do they want their total seat count in the Lower House to depend on the individual, non-coordinated actions of 300 majority candidates. These two factors can be seen as intervening variables in

explaining how congressional campaigns have been transformed due to rising electoral pressures.

I find several interesting differences in federal congressional campaigning between the competitive and hegemonic eras. First, the pressures of competition, the institutional setting, and the rules that control campaign financing have all acted to homogenize campaign styles for the three main parties in Mexico. Second, and most likely because of the flow of resources to the national party organizations, the national headquarters have modernized their side of campaigning at an astounding rate of speed, while candidates in the districts are less likely to use innovative technologies, such as data based, mass mailing, or media advertising. Third, candidates can now be distinguished more by the type of district they campaign in than by the party label they sport: deputy hopefuls in competed districts are more likely to use more modern appeals at the same time they reach out directly to the voters via personal contact. Electioneering in rural, non-competed districts are strikingly similar to the old-fashioned campaigns of the 1970s and 1980s, with the proviso that mass rallies have become less popular. Again, this paper only examines campaigning in SMD because little to none is done for the PR slots. In what follows, first the district-based campaigns are discussed and then the national parties' participation.

### *Different Aspects of Campaigning under Competitive Conditions*

Because there are so few differences among the parties in their campaign styles, this section examines the three parties together, except for short description of the fate of the PRI's sectors in campaigning. Issue appeals for all candidates have changed; there are indications that the candidates run more on solutions to local problems than on the general themes sent down by the National Executive Committees (CENs in Spanish).<sup>36</sup> The bulk of the responses from campaigners leads one to believe that as part of the transformation of campaigning under more competitive and fair circumstances, deputy hopefuls have modified and localized their promises to their constituents, in line with expectations under a SMD system. This is congruent with growing evidence that local factors play a large role in federal legislative outcomes. It is still not clear, however, that the federal deputies

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<sup>36</sup> One of the major themes of the PRI's 2003 campaigns was to promise to vote against the Value Added Tax on food and medicine. The PAN's major message was that unless it won a majority in the Lower House, the Fox administration would not be able to promote needed economic reforms.

are able to make good on their promises because of the weakness of the policy making and the no-consecutive reelection prohibition.<sup>37</sup>

Candidates from all three parties have also become more aware of modern electioneering strategies and techniques and have begun to use them in more competed districts.<sup>38</sup> As part of this modernization, we see new campaign instruments being used, such as mass mailings, television and radio spots. Radio was mentioned by most candidates as either the most or one of the most important ways of communicating with constituents. Radio spots are cheap to contract, they reach the entire district (not the entire state or region), and many people in Mexico work or live with the radio turned on all day. A good number of candidates report that they contract and plan this approach themselves, without any input from the national party. Some candidates also contract television time in local outlets, but far fewer than do radio time.<sup>39</sup>

Mass mailings are now a part of modern campaigning in Mexico, unlike 20 years ago. Those who used them stated that they were usually sent to loyal voters to strengthen the likelihood of voting on Election Day. Thirty three percent report of Mexicans report they had received some sort of information or contact from a federal candidate during the 2003 legislative mid-term election.<sup>40</sup> Advertising the candidate's name and face has always been an important part of the campaign (for all parties and for all types of elections). Propaganda material includes leaflets, hanging posts, banners, billboards, and painted walls and these items are placed using mostly paid labor, not party volunteers. In the last month before Election Day, the streets are festooned with campaign material. There is far more of this used in Mexico than in the US.<sup>41</sup>

Candidates now use both new and more traditional methods to reach the voters. In a strange twist in what is considered modern and traditional campaigning techniques, in Mexico, house-to-house canvassing has become a far more important element in competitive campaigns than it was before the 1990s. Many deputies reported that voters now want to meet and greet the candidate.<sup>42</sup> One deputy (who had also been a candidate in the 1980s under non-competitive conditions), reported that house-to-house visits were now necessary because the PRI sectors and party organization at the local level no

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with PRI federal deputy Paulino Canul, February 16, 2005. Canul stated that he had promised his voters many of the public services that only a mayor or governor can provide and that he was unable to comply with his promises as a federal deputy.

<sup>38</sup> Of the 300 majority districts in Mexico as of 2000, 62 are swing districts, slightly over 20 percent. I need to calculate electoral volatility, which I think is very high because of democratization. This may be a better measure now of the uncertain world many candidates face.

<sup>39</sup> Interviews with PAN deputy, Norberto Corella, February, 2005.

<sup>40</sup> CSES Opinion Survey, Mexico, 2003.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Julian Angulo, February, 2005.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Dr. Hugo Rodriguez, May 13, 2004.



longer function.<sup>43</sup> House visits are considered more important for urban districts or sections than they are in their rural counterparts. If voters live on *ejidos* (as they do in very rural districts), than house visits are counterproductive, and small outdoor meetings will be held.<sup>44</sup> Some candidates eschew visiting homes, preferring to walk along major arteries in larger towns stopping along the shops and giving away pamphlets.<sup>45</sup> Most candidates concur that along with the closer contact that canvassing provides this strategy creates a multiplication effect as the person visited tells his friends and family that he met the candidate. Twenty percent of respondents in a 2003 national, post-electoral opinion survey report having received a visit to their home by a candidate or a member of his team.<sup>46</sup>

Uniquely for the PRI, the sectorally “owned” districts have by and large disappeared: candidates can no longer use the manpower that these groups once offered.<sup>47</sup> Below is a table that shows how the sectoral quotas in the Lower House of Congress have fallen dramatically from the mid-1980s to the late 1990s. The party’s three sectors supposedly could place all of the Lower House representatives; all of whom had an official sectoral affiliation. In reality, however, many of those from the Peasant and Popular sectors were not leaders of any union or group within those sectors. Rather, they were “given” an affiliation when they won the candidacy. Instead of taking the party’s official sectoral affiliation (which is misleading), I studied each deputy’s professional background to determine his true base within the party. Only if the PRI candidate in question had been a leader or member of a specific sector was he placed under a sectoral category. If his career had been centered on posts in state government, he entered that group, and so on.

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<sup>43</sup> Interview with Humberto Cervantes, June 1, 2004 and with Juan Carlos Perez Gongora, May 19, 2004. Raul Mejia stated that mass rallies and the sectors no longer were a factor in campaigns and that canvassing became important in both larger and smaller towns. Interview May 27, 2004.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Julian Nazar, April 29, 2004.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Francisco Jimenez, May 26, 2004.

<sup>46</sup> CSES post-electoral opinion survey, Mexico, 2003.

<sup>47</sup> Raul Mejia, Julian Nazar, Carlos Perez Gongora, Francisco Jimenez, etc.

**TABLE 2**  
**TRUE AFFILIATION OF PRI MAJORITY DEPUTIES, 1997 COMPARED TO 1985**

BASE	1997	1985	DIFFERENCE WITH 1985.
	PERCENTAGE		
PEASANT SECTOR	6.4	15.4	-9
POPULAR SECTOR	8.4	17	-8.6
WORKERS SECTOR	11.5	23	-11.6
TOTAL, SECTORAL CANDIDATES	26.3	56	-30
GOVERNOR OR STATE GROUP	50	27	+23
FEDERAL BUREAUCRACY	11.5	18.8	-7.3
OTHER	12.2		
TOTAL	100	100	

Table elaborated by author from data taken from *¿Quién es quien en el Congreso de la Unión?* and from *El diccionario biográfico del gobierno mexicano*. I would like to thank Ignacio Marván for his help with this table.<sup>48</sup>

From this table of sectoral affiliation, we see that true sectoral deputies fell by 50 percent from 1985 to 1997. In 1985, over half of the PRI's representatives to the Lower House of Congress came from one of the party's three sectors, but under the competitive conditions of 1997, this total had fallen to just over 26 percent (and is probably even lower today). PRI politicians openly identified with the Workers sector, made up of the CTM, the CROC, the CROM, SUTERM and other unions, are simply not considered good candidates. Far fewer districts in Mexico are truly rural, so even the peasant candidates, long considered to be more effective than those from workers' unions, are running in a smaller number of areas. A deputy who had run both in the mid-1980s and in 2003 explained that the corporatist image is not good among younger and unaligned voters, so even if a candidate represents a sector, he will not broadcast this fact. More importantly, the sectors have lost their control over voters: they are no longer able to mobilize large number of voters to bring them to the polls, nor can they force or cajole them to vote for the PRI candidate. The once powerful sectors are also divided internally: almost all the associations, even at the most local level, are split by factions, or have been invaded by representatives of other

<sup>48</sup> The official distribution of PRI deputy affiliation for 1985 and 1997 are as follows: 1985, Popular sector, 48 percent, Workers, 14 percent and Peasant, 34. For 1997, the official distribution is, Popular sector, 50 percent, Workers, 11 percent, Peasant, 38 percent (Langston 1998).

parties.<sup>49</sup> The winners in this distribution are clearly candidates that come from local and state politics, who can rely on the support of their governors and mayors in their campaigns.

Another interesting change in campaigning for the PRI specifically is the death of the mass rally. Once considered the cornerstone of the PRI campaign, candidates in the competitive era now eschew the old stump speech-and -music session. Several reasons are given for this change, and most have to do with the inability of the sectors or the local party organization to organize and finance the mass events, or to control the attendees' subsequent votes.<sup>50</sup> Candidates no longer want to pay for feeding and transporting the participants, most because many of them go for the wrong reasons, i.e. the food and music.<sup>51</sup>

Another important difference between pre and post competitive campaigning are the variable strategies within the district itself. Candidates have now begun to differentiate between different sorts of precincts in their districts and target those of interest, a dramatic change over non-competitive electioneering. They use the information sent down on precinct level voting history sent down by the CEN. Depending on the type of district, most candidates focus on both their *voto duro* (heavily partisan precincts) and the swing sections.<sup>52</sup> As mentioned above, there are also noticeable differences in campaigns between different types of districts (competed or easily won; rural or urban), and well as within a district. However, the modernization aspect of campaigning should not be exaggerated: candidates still depend on small meetings and footwork in their districts.

While the former opposition parties have certainly strengthened party organization over the past 20 years, this has not been translated automatically into campaign support for candidates in districts. Much as we saw in the PRI, both the PAN and the PRD are divided into factions at the local level, and usually the group controlling the party at the municipal level will only support its own allies in campaigns. Even in those districts in which the candidate can depend on the support of the party's local organization, the candidate directs the operation of the campaign while the party's structure offers some volunteers and help with organizing events. Competed campaigns in Mexico are candidate-based affairs, even though deputies cannot construct long-term legislative careers. This is probably due to the fact that most federal deputies return to their states after their three year terms end.

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<sup>49</sup> Humberto Cervantes states that even at the level of the ejido, one can find representatives of other parties. Interview June 1, 2004. On the other hand, Jorge Utrilla, who ran in a largely indigenous district, reported that these groups still voted as an entity, so the candidate only had to make deals with the leaders, not with the individual voter.

<sup>50</sup> Interviews with Jorge Utrilla, May 25, 2004, with Raul Mejia, May 27, 2004, Humberto Cervantes, June 1, 2004, and Francisco Jimenez, May 26, 2004.

<sup>51</sup> This was true even of the most rural districts. Interview with Julian Nazar, April 29, 2004.

<sup>52</sup> Interviews with Julian Angulo, February, 2005, Norberto Corella, February, 2005.

Winning a congressional slot is an important stepping stone both for becoming a governor or even a mayor, and since the parties' structures at the local levels are not strong enough to carry out campaigns, the candidates step in to try to assure their victories.

The governors have become crucial players in both congressional election campaigns. According to several deputies interviewed, the PRI governors can provide money and human resources that they can siphon from state government offices and the federal dependencies in his state. They can obligate unions in the state's districts to aid in the campaigns, and can help in media appeals.<sup>53</sup> Finally, the governors can tour the state and make speeches supporting the candidate, and hold private meetings with local leaders asking them to back the PRI candidate.<sup>54</sup> The governors who are members of the PRI to a large extent have control over their state-level party organizations (SPOs) and can encourage PRI mayors in their states to work for the deputy hopefuls during campaign season.<sup>55</sup>

### The Role of the National Party Organizations

The role of the CENs of the three parties in modern, competitive congressional campaigns has become strikingly different that it was under the PRI's hegemony, and far more modernized than the district based campaigns. According to my interviews with both members of the CEN and candidates in the modern era, the national leadership's most important role is to manage the national mass media appeals (largely television spots). The millions of pesos that are funneled through the CENs and the availability of advanced technologies of communication, especially televised advertising, have obligated all three parties to focus on devising or improving their national media appeals. Both the desire to maintain control over party finances and raise voting numbers across the nation have convinced the parties' leaders not to devolve advertising responsibilities to the state or district levels. One of the consequences of this centralizing tendency has been to further reduce the individual politician's capacity to foster a personal vote, because their district media appeals are far less developed than those designed to sell the party as a whole.

As we saw above, Mexico's electoral laws dictate that the Lower House of Congress is made up of 300 deputies elected in single member districts and 200 in 5 PR districts that are chosen from closed lists with a single ballot. The parties have limited resources to spread over these 300 plurality races in uninominal districts. The parties' strategy is to win both votes and districts because of the mixed plurality-PR electoral system. In a pure plurality system,

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<sup>53</sup> Interview with Jesus Maria Ramon, June 15, 2004.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Francisco Jimenez Merino, May 26, 2004.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Jose Luis Flores, April 26, 2004 and with Mario Zepahua, May 31, 2004.

one should expect to see the parties spend resources on those closely fought districts in which they could either win or lose, leaving the hopeless races and the already-won districts with less money (Jacobson 1985). However, in Mexico, because of the two-tiered electoral system, the parties must spend money in a wider range of districts.<sup>56</sup> The second-tier PR allocation is based on the lower-tier plurality vote: there are not two separate ballots for each type of seat. Therefore, all plurality seats, both those that are hopeless or easily won, must deliver the maximum vote count possible to win a larger number of votes in the regional PR district to gain more seats in the Lower House of Congress. Some districts are more important than others not so much because of the number of voters, but because of the numbers of assured PRI voters.<sup>57</sup> The national parties still have strong incentives to make sure each candidate wins the maximum number of votes, even if they lose the district.

The second most important task is to provide the candidates with information that takes the form of district level opinion polls that are held at various points in the campaign and precinct level voting histories. The national leaderships are also becoming more active in unifying campaign styles, messages, and image and the three send out guides at the beginning of the campaign to each congressional hopeful that delineate strategies that are suitable for different types of districts.<sup>58</sup> For the most part, candidates are allowed to pick and choose what messages they will emphasize in their individual campaigns and which ones they will ignore.

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<sup>56</sup> Interview with Hector Hugo Olivares, former member of the CEN, February 24, 2000.

<sup>57</sup> There was a redistricting to even out the numbers of voters in the 300 majoritarian districts as a result of the 1996 reforms.

<sup>58</sup> Rafael Giménez, a polling consultant for the PAN, notes that for the first time in 2003, the CEN sent out campaign guides that candidates were expected to follow. Interview, February, 2005.

## *Conclusions*

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For the PRI, this paper has presented a surprising result; except for districts with a very strong sectoral presence, PRI deputy candidates under hegemonic conditions had a long history of conducting and managing their district campaigns in many areas without much input or help from the national party, aside from some degree of monitoring and admonishing. While PRI candidates have included more modern campaign techniques such as mass mailings, radio appeals, and some local television advertising in their repertoire in the new competitive setting, they continue to run their district races with their own strategies and tactics and personally chosen personnel with little interference from national headquarters. There is a difference in degree and intensity in the PRI's district electioneering, not so much in kind.

A tug of war is currently taking place between the district candidates who run increasingly competitive campaigns in which local effects matter, and the centralized party headquarters, which retain a large portion of public funds for national media appeals. The mixed-member electoral system drives parties to maximize votes as well as district wins. National party leaders believe that television promotional spots can convince voters to support all their candidates across the 300 districts and that this centralized strategy is a better way to increase seat totals in the Chamber of Deputies than by sending more money to district candidates. National party leaders also understand that by controlling campaign finance and distributing funds to district candidates as they see fit, they can retain a good deal of authority over their elected partisans, who as we have seen, are unable to create long-term legislative careers due the constitutional prohibition on consecutive reelection.

While federal deputy candidates run local district campaigns based partially on their personal images and on local problems, they are hard-pressed to "bring home the bacon," that is, deliver district specific spending provided by the federal budget. Many of the demands of voters are not just for national programmatic promises, but also for much needed local services such as light, public security, pavement, and better schools, all public goods that are provided either by the municipality or the state, not the federal government. Federal deputy candidates can act as brokers between the voters and the municipal and state governments before and after the election, but without the power of long-term legislative careers, they find themselves weak vis-à-vis the national party and caucus leaders in terms of making policy or procuring money and projects for their districts. Local politics has an impact on the district campaigns, but the electoral rules make it difficult for the individual deputies, even those elected in districts to bring these concerns successfully to the Chamber of Deputies.

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