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III. ELECTORAL COMPETITION IN THE MEXICAN MEDIA

A Case Study of the Election for Governor in the State of Michoacán 1992

SHAWN M. WADE*

I. INTRODUCTION

As the United States debates the specifics of a free trade agreement with Mexico, the issue of democracy in this emerging economic power has taken on new importance. Mexico may be seen as a limited democracy, to the extent that people vote and that multiple parties exist.¹ Conversely, voting in Mexico may be seen as a pro-forma exercise in which choices are limited by the official ruling party—Party of the Institutional Revolution (“PRI”). The PRI has ruled the country exclusively at the national level and almost exclusively at the state level for more than sixty years.

This Article presents a micro-study of the critical July 12, 1992, gubernatorial election in Michoacán, Mexico. Although the Mexican Government makes every effort to ensure the integrity of the electoral process, it is difficult to claim that the PRI is genuinely ready to permit challenges to its rule, especially those coming from

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1. There are at least seven political parties that routinely make the ballot in Mexican elections: (1) Party of the Institutional Revolution (“PRI”); (2) National Action Party (“PAN”); (3) Party of the Democratic Revolution (“PRD”); (4) Authentic Party of the Mexican Revolution (“PARM”); (5) Party of the Cardenist Front for National Reconstruction (“PFCRN”); (6) Popular Socialist Party (“PPS”); and (7) Mexican Democratic Party (“PDM”). The PAN is the PRI’s closest competitor to the right and endorses recent critical reforms by the party, including the North American Free Trade Agreement (“NAFTA”). The PRD is the PRI’s closest competitor to the left. *See infra* part II.

the left. In order to control political challengers, the Mexican Government attempts to control all phases of the electoral process. These phases range from its benign control of the campaign process, to the overwhelming advantage in resources, and even extends into the more serious manipulation of electoral institutions.

In an attempt to evaluate the true nature of the electoral process in Mexico, this Article examines three general issues surrounding the elections in the State of Michoacán. First, this Article will review a media study that maps the number of advertisements placed by each political party during the preelectoral period in the written press, on the radio, and on television. The results of the study show an overwhelming advantage for the official party. They also reveal interesting deviations in the weeks immediately preceding the July 12 vote regarding the average number of newspaper articles for the PRI versus those for its principal challenger.

Second, this Article will describe the way Federal Government spending is used to influence the electorate. Federal funds poured into the State of Michoacán, Mexico's third poorest state, after the state voted against Mexico's current President, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, in the 1988 Presidential elections. In only three years following the elections, federal funds distributed by the *Programa Nacional de Solidaridad* ("PRONASOL")² contributed to a five-fold increase in spending in Michoacán. In addition, federal funds are given, both publicly and clandestinely, to other political parties in the electoral competition in order to pull votes away from the PRI's principal rivals.

Third, this Article will explore the Government's and the PRI's control over the electoral institutions that govern the electoral process in Mexico. This control ranges from sublime efforts to dominate the personnel guarding and administering the polling places on election day, to egregious efforts to manipulate the voter registration list. The voter registration list is manipulated in order to thin out the number of opposition voters and inflate the number of voters for the official party.

2. PRONASOL is President Salinas' federal social-welfare program financed partly by the funds garnered through the sale of state-owned enterprises. See generally DENISE DRESSER, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO, NEOPOLITAN SOLUTIONS TO NEOLIBERAL PROBLEMS: MEXICO'S NATIONAL SOLIDARITY PROGRAM (1991).

II. BACKGROUND

In 1987, the PRI experienced a significant split in its elite. Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the son of Mexico's most famous modern President, left the PRI in order to challenge Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the PRI's candidate for President in the 1988 Presidential elections. The results of this contest are unknown. It is widely speculated, however, that Cárdenas received more votes than actually recorded by the official results and that he may have been the actual winner. By fraudulently manipulating the counting process after the elections, the Government was able to claim that Salinas and the PRI had won with 50.36% of the votes—the smallest margin ever garnered by a PRI candidate for President.³

After months of nationwide protests, Salinas took office, while Cárdenas formed a rival political party to the left of the PRI called the Party of the Democratic Revolution ("PRD"). Prospects for the new party were good until it collided with the electoral machine of the PRI. Until 1992, the PRD failed to win a Governorship in Mexico. This is an important office because it serves as the fundamental control mechanism for the administration of federal funds in individual states.

In 1992, elections for Governor were scheduled to take place in the State of Michoacán. This state is important for many reasons: it is the birth place of Cárdenas and his famous father, Lázaro Cárdenas; it is the state where Lázaro served as Governor before becoming President; and it is the state where Cuauhtémoc, representing the PRI, served as Governor from 1980 to 1986. During the 1988 elections, the PRD had shown itself to be a serious challenger in Michoacán by winning mayoral elections in over half of the municipalities and electing two Senators to the Federal Government.

Nonetheless, the PRD's electoral advantage in Michoacán decreased after 1988. This downfall was due, in part, to PRI's manipulation of the electoral system and the five-fold federal spending following the state's support for Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas in the 1988 Presidential elections.⁴

3. For accounts of electoral fraud, see Andrew Reding, *Mexico at Crossroads: The 1988 Election and Beyond*, 5 *WORLD POL'Y J.* 615 (1988); Andrew Reding, *Mexico Under Salinas: A Facade of Reform*, 6 *WORLD POL'Y J.* 685 (1989).

4. For an analysis of recent voting trends in the State of Michoacán, see *Elecciones en Chihuahua y Michoacán*, NEXOS, June 1992.

By all accounts, the election was to be an interesting one and a serious case by which to judge President Salinas' stated commitment to the democratization of Mexico.

III. THE MEDIA

The financing of political parties in Mexico is ostensibly public. Each party meeting a series of minimal requirements⁵ is awarded, among other things, a specified quantity of media access on public television and radio stations. The quantity corresponds to the electoral percentage attained in the most recent federal election. The individual state policies largely parallel federal practices for media access during electoral periods.

The Federal Electoral Institute ("IFE") is the Mexican institution that governs electoral procedures.⁶ Through the preelectoral period for the 1991 federal elections, it reported that, on both radio and television, each of the ten registered political parties advertised at least 19 hours and 58 minutes.⁷ The PRI, however, while advertising the most, only ran 26 hours and 28 minutes worth of spots.⁸ The PRI's nearest rival, the PRD, ran nearly 23 hours of radio advertising.⁹

The equal radio time would appear to indicate a parity between the parties in this area. The official allocation and record of radio and television time, however, does not include the purchase of advertising allowed above that provided without charge.¹⁰ Furthermore, access to newspapers is not regulated by the IFE. Observations and interviews conducted with the three branches of the Mexican media prior to the July 12, 1992, campaign in Michoacán illustrate an entirely different picture of electoral competition in this medium.

A. Newspapers

Measuring the level at which particular parties are able to "advertise" in the written press is difficult in Mexico. To complicate

5. The requirements include filing a statement of purpose, a platform, and demonstrating sufficient public support. Public support is generated through a series of public meetings in which a notary verifies a minimum attendance. C.O.F.I.P.E. arts. 22-35 (Mex.).

6. *Prerogativas del registro de partidos*, NEXOS, January 1992, at 94.

7. *Id.*

8. *Id.*

9. *Id.*

10. *Id.* at 95.

matters further, paid advertisements are often not identified as such but published as if they were articles written by independent reporters. Although this phenomenon is not as prevalent in the “national newspapers” of Mexico City, even at this level, *La Jornada* is the only national paper to identify articles called in by particular parties—as opposed to reported by individual reporters—by placing them in italics. In local newspapers, those most significant outside of Mexico City, there is almost no criterion by which one can judge whether or not a particular article is legitimate or a political advertisement. In order to determine fairly the newspaper access of each party, the average number of paragraphs, articles and/or reports, and photographs for each party were counted.

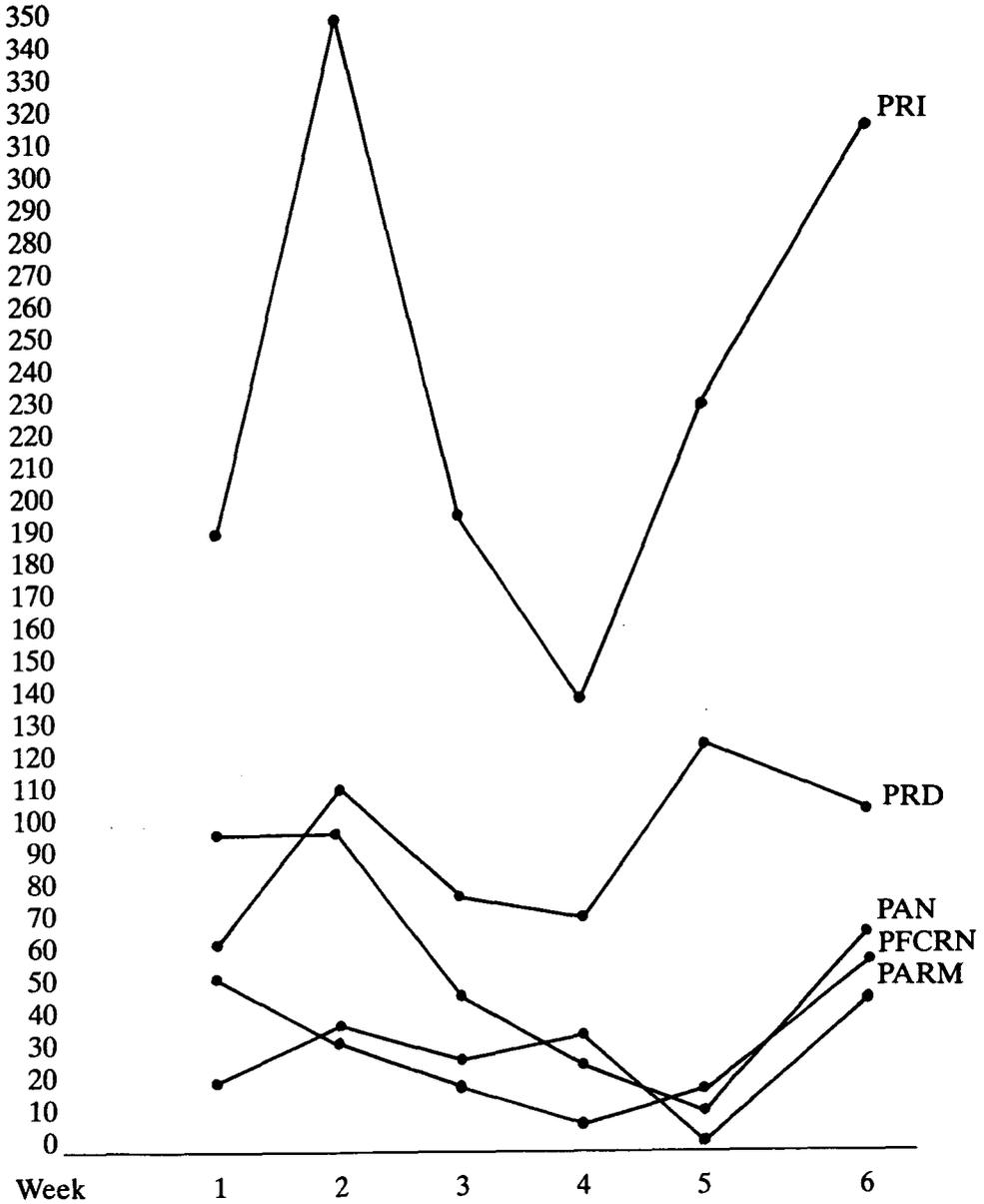
In Michoacán, there is one predominant source of newspaper information—*La Voz de Michoacán*. For three reasons, this paper plays a primary role in Michoacán elections. First, it is the only newspaper received throughout the state, while the others are found exclusively in the capital city of Morelia. Second, it outranks all other papers in circulation with an average daily printing of 50,000 copies.¹¹ Third, because the state is one of the most rural in the nation, its constituents depend on newspapers, as opposed to television or radio, for information.

The following three charts graph the weekly average of (1) paragraphs devoted to each party in the election, (2) articles and/or reports published about each party, and (3) black-and-white photographs relating to each party printed during the seven weeks preceding the July 8, 1992, official end-of-campaign date.¹²

11. *La Voz*'s nearest competitor is *El Sol de Morelia* with a daily circulation of 20,000, and the nearest national competitor is *La Jornada* with a daily circulation of 1,000.

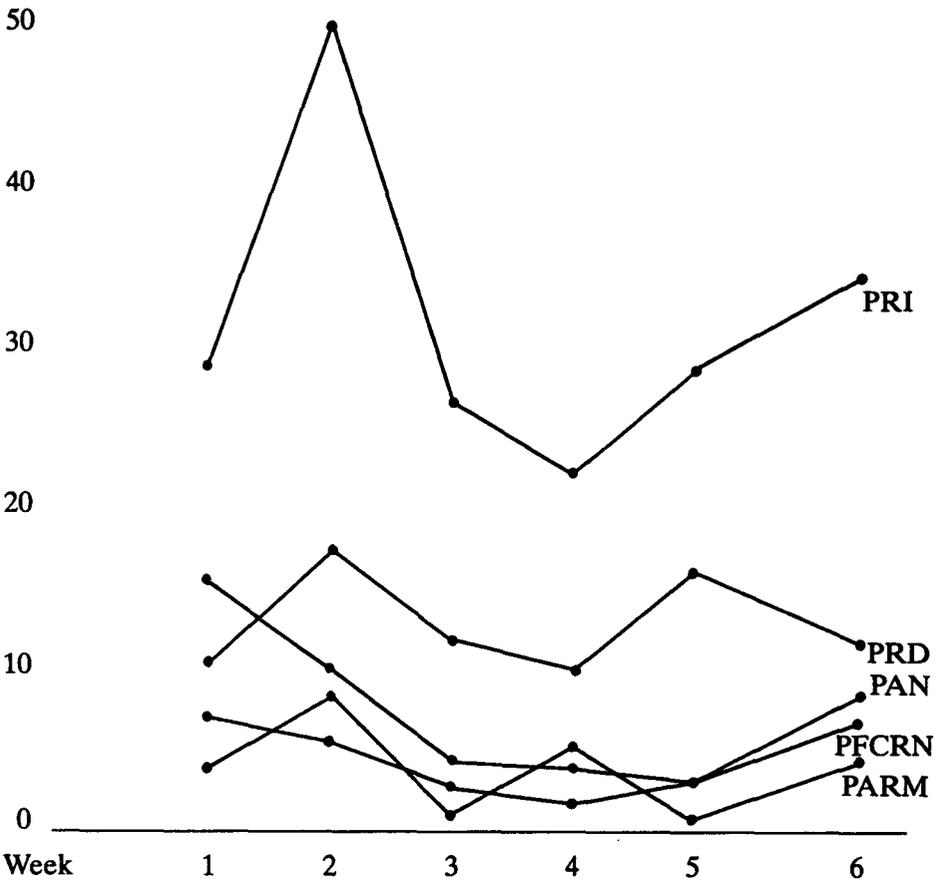
12. The author did not graph color photos because, during the entire preelectoral period, the PRI received all color photos (41) except two received by the PRD.

Number of Paragraphs Per Week



(Start date for week 1, June 1, 1992. End date for week 6, July 12, 1992).

Number of Articles and/or Reports Per Week



(Start date for week 1, June 1, 1992. End date for week 6, July 12, 1992).

Black and White Photos Per Week

70

60

50

40

30

20

10

0

Week

1

2

3

4

5

6

PRI

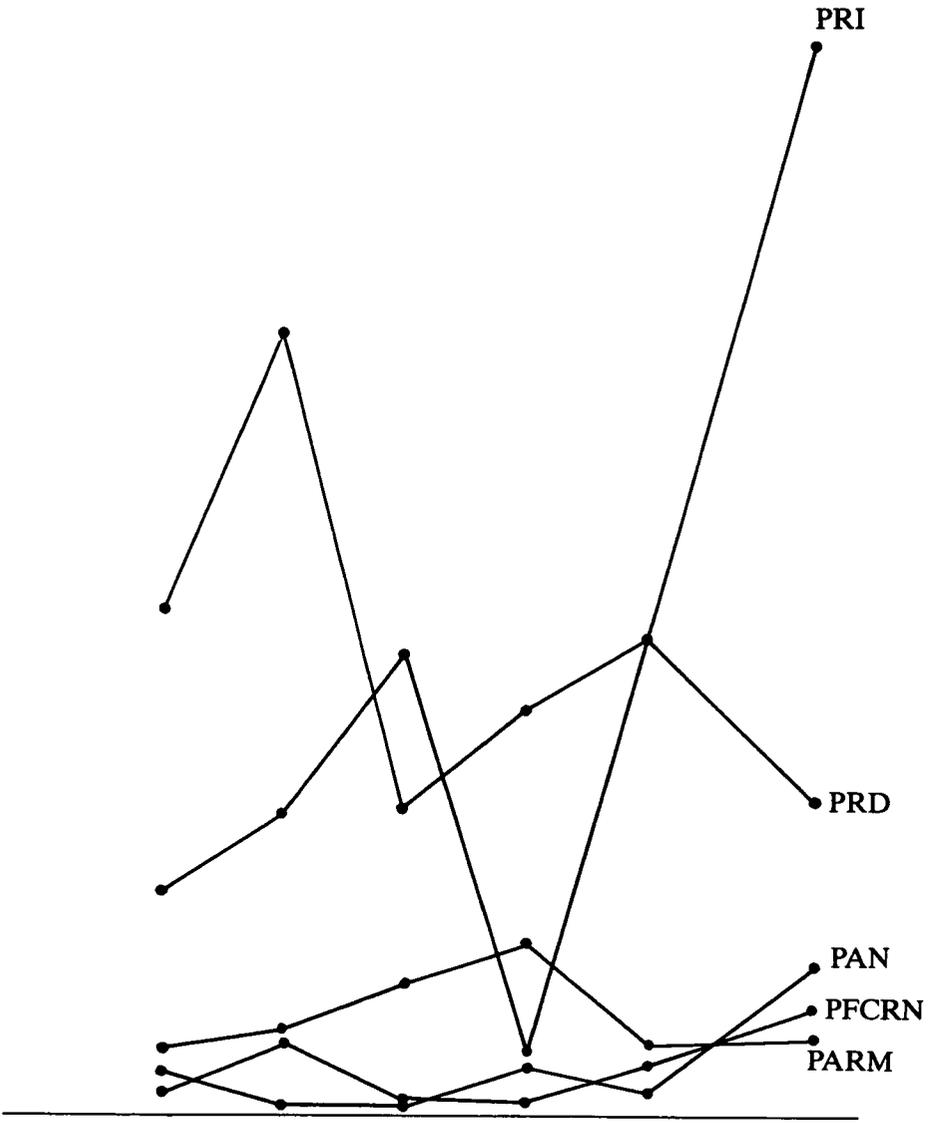
PRD

PAN

PFCRN

PARM

(Start date for week one, June 1, 1992. End date for week 6, July 12, 1992).



At least two observations should be noted. First, the PRI held more than a two-to-one advantage in all three categories at almost all times, except two weeks during which the PRD and the PRI had almost the same amount of photos. This deviation, however, is explained by the fact that, during these two weeks, the PRD received a great deal of negative press, principally through photos, in the PRI's effort to cast the party as one of violence. At all other times, the PRD, the PRI's strongest challenger, was closer to all the other political parties.¹³

Second, during the week immediately preceding the election, the PRI enjoyed greater coverage in all three categories, while its nearest competitor, the PRD, fell in all three. All the other parties increased their final week coverage.¹⁴

B. Television

There are two local television stations in the State of Michoacán. The public station ("Channel 2") provides advertising for political parties at a federally-mandated discount rate. The private station ("Channel 13"), however, has the larger viewership of the two in the state. The following charts map the total number of spots purchased by each party during the entire electoral campaign on each of the two channels.

Channel 2:

Party	%	Start Date	End Date	Per Day	Total
PRI	52.7	May 1	July 8	8	552
PAN	6.7	June 1	July 8	4	152
PARM	1.2	May 15	July 8	7	385
PFCRN	1.7	June 25	July 8	8	112
PRD	36.5	no ads run			

% = percent polled in July 12, 1992, elections

13. The other parties had failed to poll over seven percent of the electorate individually.

14. At this point, this Article might also have included a similar analysis for *La Voz de Michoacán's* nearest competitor, *El Sol de Morelia*. Because the differences between the PRI and the other parties, especially the PRD, are even more skewed (1,116 total paragraphs for the PRI as opposed to 165 for the PRD), however, and as *El Sol* is not circulated outside the capital city of Morelia, the point seems redundant.

Channel 13:				Per Day on	Total
Party	%	Start Date	End Date	July 8	\$ Spent
PRI	52.7	May	July 8	14	59,016.00
PAN	6.7	May	July 8	4	4,918.00
PARM	1.2	?	July 8	5	9,836.00
PRD	36.5	no ads run			

% = percent polled in July 12, 1992, elections

The PRI's dominance in the area of media advertising is more apparent than it is in the area of print advertising. On Channel 2, all parties except the PRD purchase only the time allowed at the subsidized rates. This generally shows that Channel 13 is a much more popular channel than the public station. If Channel 2 rates were not subsidized, party funds would only be spent on Channel 13. Still, the PRI averaged fourteen spots per day on Channel 13, dominating its nearest competitor on a per day basis. In addition, the PRI started advertising far earlier than its opponents. Thus, in terms of the gross number of advertisements, the PRI clearly dominated.

Finally, the PRI's most significant rival, the PRD, did not advertise on television at all. A PRD campaign official explained this phenomenon in terms of constituency and cost. The PRD's constituency is largely rural and poor. Because few poor rural families have televisions, television advertising, even at subsidized rates, is inefficient.

C. Radio

Aside from their coverage in *La Voz de Michoacán*, PRD considers radio to be its most effective form of political access to the electorate. Radio is considered most effective because it reaches the primary target of the party—the rural poor, which represents thirty percent of the electorate. Before beginning research into radio advertising in the state, the author expected to find that, at least in this category, the PRD would be competitive with the PRI. The results of the study, however, demonstrate that the PRI maintains a large advantage over its rivals in radio advertising as well. This advantage is achieved both at the daily level and the gross level. The PRI began its radio advertising campaign before any other party and maintained a superior level throughout the campaign. The PRD, on the other hand, began its radio advertising

late and did not agree with the largest radio chain in the state regarding the number of advertisements it wanted to run, at what cost, and on what stations. Even the PRD's radio consultant considered the number of spots purchased and their primary use in the final weeks of the campaign to be an inefficient strategy. Given the cost of a radio campaign, however, no party, other than the PRI, has the option of running an effective ad campaign for the entire five-month electoral period.

RADIO SPOTS BY PARTY¹⁵

Party	Start Day	End Day	Per Day	Total Spots
PRI	April 14	July 8	25	2,456
PAN	June 16	July 8	9	207
PARM	May 18	July 8	15	780
PFCRN	March 14	March 18	2	8
PRD	June 29	July 8	15-50*	308

* 15 per day from June 29 through July 6, and between 19 and 50 from July 6 to July 8.

If the PRI were merely the strongest party in the country with financial strength achieved by legitimate fundraising activities, one might make the argument that the lack of competitiveness in media access was merely a reflection of the population's strong preferences for the official party. This, however, is not the case. In fact, the PRI and the Government as an institution are difficult to distinguish. Sources of campaign financing are not a matter of public record. Although it is difficult to prove, anecdotal evidence strongly indicates that the party is funded largely through its role as Government. In short, government resources are commingled with party resources. This advantage is reflected in the large disparity of media access.

Although no party made its campaign spending a matter of public record (the National Action Party ("PAN") offered to, if others complied), estimates this author received from the PRD directly and from various other sources indicate that the PRI outspent its nearest rival by six to ten times.¹⁶

15. This study includes all PRD spots purchased. Only those PRI spots purchased on the largest chain of radio stations in the state were available. The number of PRI spots purchased statewide could actually be much higher.

16. The sources indicate that the PRD spent 5 million U.S. dollars, as compared to 30 to 50 million U.S. dollars spent by the PRI. Interview with Alfonso Millan, PRD Campaign Advisor, at Morelia, Michoacán (July 1, 1992). The Mexican periodical *Proceso*

IV. FEDERAL FUNDS

A. *Solidarity*

During the 1988 Presidential elections, a new system of computer-operated ballot-counting was introduced in Mexico, which promised to expedite the electoral process. Yet, as this system began to yield results that were not favorable to the PRI, it conveniently failed. Institutions controlled by the Government and the official party took over the counting process, announcing a PRI victory more than a week after election day.¹⁷ Election results in few states were announced before the system failed, however. Michoacán's results favored Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. The PRI was served a warning that the state favored an opposition candidate and that future elections in the state might serve to solidify the position of the opposition party.

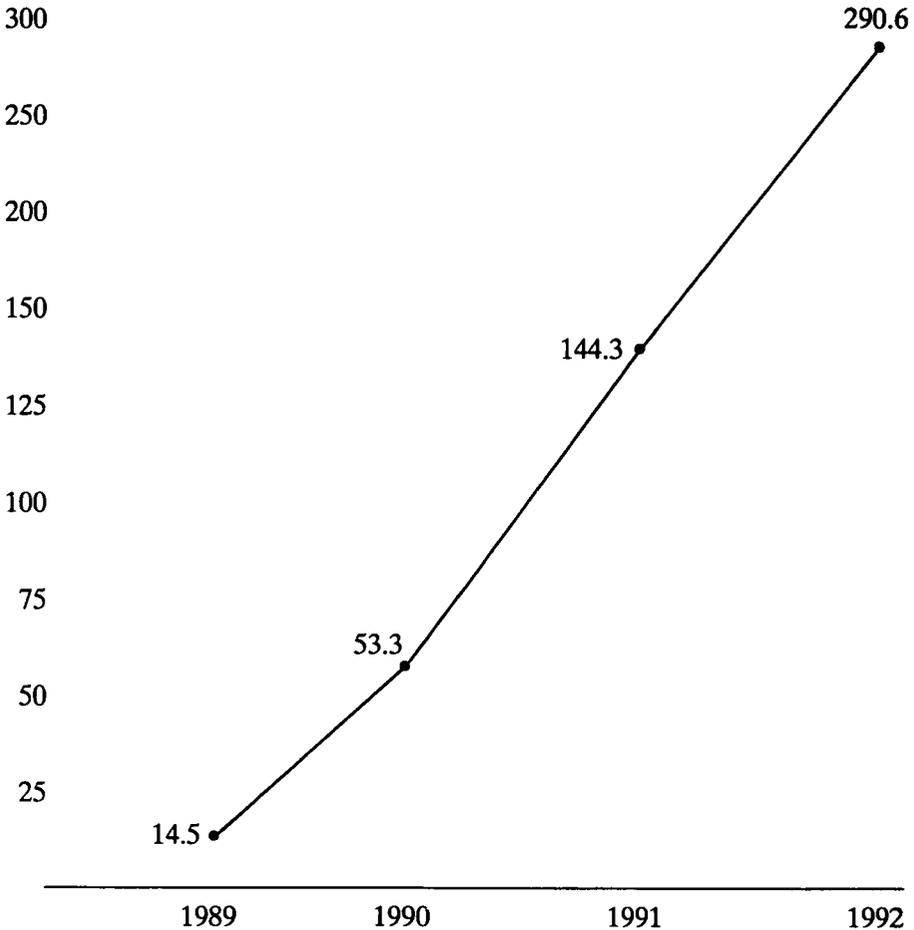
In its own tried and true fashion, the PRI attempted to address this problem with financial resources instead of repression. Shortly after his inauguration, Salinas announced the formation of PRONASOL, or Solidarity, a social welfare spending program financed partly by funds garnered through the sale of state-owned enterprises. Not surprisingly, the State of Michoacán stood at the top of the list of benefactors of the new program. From 1989 to 1991, Michoacán received nearly 300 million U.S. dollars in Solidarity funds, making it the top-ranking recipient in the nation. In addition, other federal funds also poured into the state's general account, creating an eight-fold increase in federal financing.¹⁸

gives a conservative estimate of the PRI's spending of 66 to 67 million U.S. dollars. Samuel Máñez Puente, *Incredulidad*, PROCESO, July 20, 1992, at 35.

17. Andrew Reding, *Mexico at a Crossroads: The 1989 Election and Beyond*, 4 WORLD POL'Y J. 616 (1988).

18. Carlos Acosta, *Con su Apresuramiento del Lunes 13, Salinas Culminó su Intervención en Chihuahua y Michoacán*, PROCESO, July 20, 1992, at 12.

Solidarity Spending in Michoacán
(in millions of dollars)¹⁹



The PRI denies the claim that federal funds have been used to influence the Michoacán electorate in its favor. The PRI asserts that Solidarity funds in Michoacán are distributed by the local municipalities and that, as half of them are controlled by the PRD, either party could as easily manipulate the funds. This reply is ingenious. In fact, municipalities only nominally administer Solidarity funds. Although Solidarity funds do pass through the treasuries

19. *Id.*

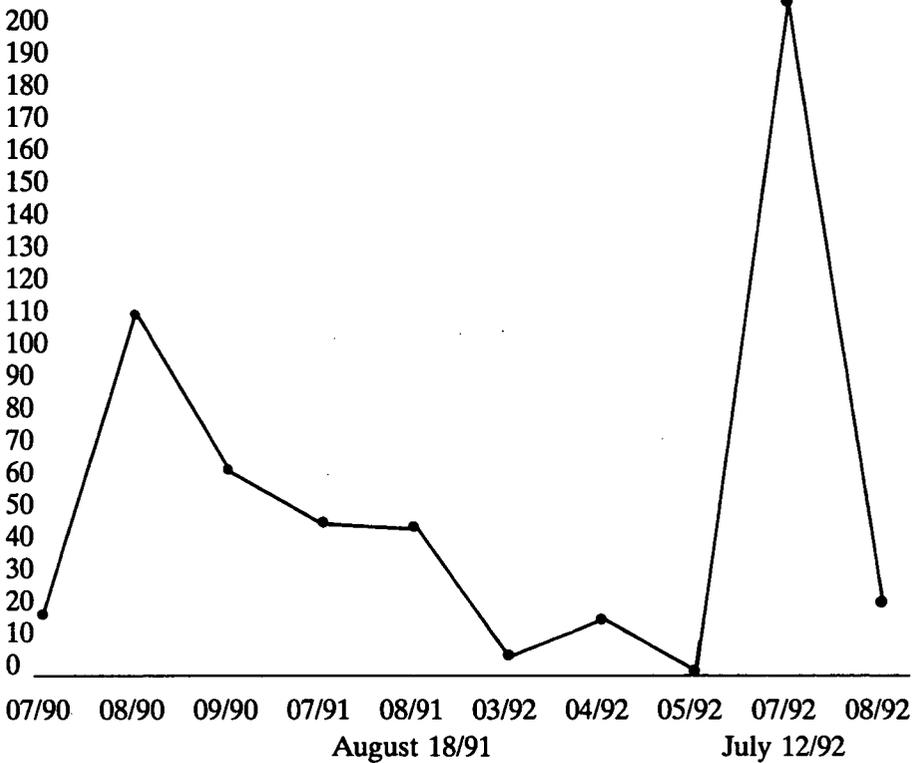
of municipalities, they come attached with a list of required recipients for all the funds received.²⁰

Although one can demonstrate that municipalities in Michoacán do not control federal funds, this does not prove that these funds come with political strings attached. Equally unconvincing is the fact that the banner colors of the Solidarity program mimic the official colors of the PRI and the official colors of the Mexican flag. Furthermore, it is not persuasive to note that, in a nationally-publicized speech given only seven days before the gubernatorial election in Michoacán, Mexico's President conveniently reiterated Michoacán's preeminence in Solidarity's funding scale. It would be much more convincing to demonstrate that dispensing of federal funds is manipulated to coincide with electoral periods.

Nonetheless, this approach lacks systematic examination. What follows is a graph of Solidarity funds distributed in a particular municipality through the July 12 electoral period.

20. This data is based on interviews with a municipal president and a treasurer who provided recipient lists and amounts that accompanied the arrival of Solidarity funds.

Solidarity Fund Distribution
(in thousands of dollars)²¹



B. The Other Parties

In addition to free and subsidized media access, political parties in Mexico are provided public funding. Half of the fund is shared equally among all the registered political parties, and the other half is shared in proportion to the quantity of the electorate they polled in the most recent federal elections. Individual states also provide minimal public campaign funds. In real terms, the smallest party receives somewhere in the order of one million U.S. dollars per year.

At the national level, however, public campaign funds cannot begin to compensate for the costs of running a political party. This

21. It should be noted that this study lacks a sufficient number of observation points. More work is necessary before clear trends can be demonstrated.

is particularly noteworthy when a party, in order to remain registered, must poll a minimum of 1.5% of the electorate at the national level and must, therefore, run campaigns in most of the twenty-six states. What compensates for the difference between public funds and the real campaign cost is not fundraising but illegal pay-offs from the PRI to some of the other political parties. These pay-offs ensure the facade of a multi-party democracy in Mexico as well as draw votes away from serious PRI rivals.

In Michoacán, a small political party known as the Party of the Cardenist Front for National Reconstruction, or *Frente Cardenista* ("PFCRN"), serves as an example of how the PRI manipulates small parties against serious political challengers.

The PFCRN made its first move by soliciting the defection of a leading PRD figure who was disgruntled after being a front running candidate for nomination as the party's gubernatorial candidate and losing. By enticing a defector away from the PRD with financial resources provided by the Government, the PFCRN accomplished three things. First, it weakened the PRD by stealing away political talent. Second, it made the PRD look as if it were run by opportunists. Finally, it took votes away from the PRD by recruiting an ex-PRD mayoral candidate who received the largest share of votes in the state's second largest city. This small party also ran the defector as their gubernatorial candidate, thereby maximizing the damage.

As its primary goal, the PFCRN and its candidate, Octaviano Alanis, were to hound the PRD and try to portray it as the party of violence.²² The methods used by the PFCRN to harass the PRD are informative. Using PRI resources, the PFCRN organized garbage collectors of Michoacán's capital—Morelia—who were engaged in a dispute with the city's mayor, who was a member of the PRD. By organizing these independent collectors who had been dumping illegally, the PFCRN was able to afford them protection and thwart the PRD mayor's efforts to resolve the illegal dumping problem. The PFCRN, in an effort to portray the mayor as ineffective in resolving critical problems, collected a mountain of trash

22. The State of Michoacán has the second most political violence in Mexico. Thus, political violence has become one of the primary campaign issues in Michoacán. One non-governmental organization, the *Convergencia*, found, in a sample of 605 written press articles, that the PRD was mentioned 42 times negatively and only twice positively, while the PRI was mentioned 35 times positively and only 10 times negatively. Source on file with author.

and dumped it on the porch of the mayor's home. The mayor was politically immobilized, as any response would have required police assistance, and police involvement would have played into the PRI's (and the PFCRN's) scheme to portray the PRD as undemocratic and violent.

Whether federal funds are manipulated to maximize political gain through their timely disbursement or through the disguise of smaller political parties, government funds are a political tool wielded by the PRI in its administrative role. Because the PRI's rival parties rarely gain control over whole states or governorships,²³ the opposition does not have the opportunity to control federal funds.

V. ELECTORAL INSTITUTIONS

A. *Voting Places*

At the beginning of each electoral period, twenty percent of the electorate is chosen at random to attend classes that educate them on the electoral process. These chosen citizens then take an examination that ranks them based on their knowledge of the electoral administration process. Those who rank at the top of their class are chosen to administer their local polling place as presidents and secretaries. In addition, each party has the right to nominate two registered citizens to serve as one of the two scrutinizers of the electoral process in each voting place. From a pool of up to fourteen, two scrutinizers are chosen on the same test score basis as the president and secretary. Finally, each party is allowed to guard each polling place with a party representative.²⁴

Again, by the letter of the law, one might expect that the above process would lead to an equitable distribution of polling place administrators according to party. This is especially true in a state where the dominant party polls only 52.7% of the electorate and its nearest rival 36.5%.²⁵ In reality, however, the PRI controls the staffing of polling places by manipulating the selection process.

23. Even the PAN, in its best year, has only held three governorships.

24. LEY ELECTORAL DEL ESTADO DE MICHOACAN DE OCAMPO art. 26(e) (Mex.).

25. These percentages represent the results posted in the July 12, 1992, gubernatorial race.

A survey of officials working in two randomly-chosen districts²⁶ demonstrates the control exercised by the PRI. The number of polling place officials who repeat their position from the previous election is particularly indicative, given that the odds of repeating as a polling official in two successive elections are very slight.²⁷ For example, in District VI (Municipality of Uruapan), 61 of the 300 (approximately 20.0%) polling places were staffed by the same officers in 1991 and 1992. In terms of official polling place positions, 75 of the 284 (approximately 28.0%) were filled by the same individuals in 1991 and 1992. Similarly, in District I (urban area of Morelia), 117 of approximately 300 (39.0%) voting places were staffed by the same officers in 1991 and 1992. Furthermore, the number of total polling place officials who served in 1991 and 1992 was 212 out of 1,200 (17.6%).

Because the author was not able to do a study for more than two elections, he could not confirm that the same individuals who served in 1991 and 1992 had also served in the previous elections. While the odds of serving consecutively in two elections are one in ten, the odds for three elections would be greater. In the polling places the author observed, the same individuals who worked as secretaries or scrutinizers were the same individuals who had served as such for the past ten to fifteen years, a truly incredible coincidence.

Additionally, a study done by the Convergence of Civil Organizations for Democracy, or *Convergencia*, a group of nongovernmental organizations, confirms the PAN and the PRD's argument that polling place administrators are almost exclusively members of the PRI. For example, in District III (Pátzcuaro), the number of polling place presidents who were active PRI members was 122 out of 157 (77%), while the nearest opposition party, the PRD, had only 10 (6%). The PRI also dominated the secretary position with 107 out of 157 (68%), while the PRD had only 9 (or 6%). Furthermore, the PRI supporters held 100% of the positions responsible for selecting and testing the randomly-chosen citizens.

26. This survey is based on the available information and does not account for all the districts, as not all districts were monitored.

27. Actually, the odds of being selected in two successive electoral periods in the twenty percent random group is one in ten; however, as skill is also a factor, odds cannot be calculated.

B. The Electoral Registry

Two types of problems exist with regards to the registration process of electors in Michoacán. First, there are multiple errors in the list of eligible electors, ranging from unregistered eligible voters to dead individuals registered. Second, there exist errors in the list which might indicate manipulation of the registry in favor of a particular party.

Of the first type, there is no shortage of examples. In District III (Pátzcuaro), 689 citizens did not live in the indicated residences, 126 registered voters were dead, 52 registered voters never received voting credentials, 568 registered voters lived in the United States, and 246 citizens did not receive any official reply after requesting to be registered.²⁸

In addition, the *Centro de Estudios de la Sociedad Mexicana* examined a random sample of 719 names on the registry of voters in the capital city of Morelia.²⁹ They found that: 44.0% of the registered voters did not live in the address indicated; 1.2% of the registered voters were already dead; and 6.4% of the registered voters had false addresses.

These errors do not constitute fraud, nor do they indicate intentional manipulation of the electoral registry. On the whole, they indicate a margin of error in the electoral registry of between 10 and 11%.³⁰ In the context of the final results of the election for Governor, the margin of error cannot cover the margin of victory for the PRI. In various districts within the state, however, the margin of victory for the winning party falls within the margin of error for the electoral registry—eight out of eighteen to be exact. Because state representatives come from these districts, one can see the critical nature of the margin of error in this context.

With regards to the second form of electoral registry errors—manipulation towards the ends of benefiting a specific party, no conclusive evidence is available. For example, various counties within the state have voter registries that list more citizens than actually live in these counties. In five counties, inflated registries

28. This information is based on registry checking procedure conducted by PRD student-employees.

29. CUAUHTEMOC RIVER GODINEZ, *CENTRO DE ESTUDIOS DE LA SOCIEDAD MEXICANA, MICHOACAN: DERECHOS POLITICOS Y PACTOS DE CIVILIDAD 6* (1992).

30. These are the exact figures for the capital city of Morelia.

ranged from 103.5% of the total population to 117.5%.³¹ These counties, however, are not exclusively strongholds of the PRI. In fact, in three of the counties, neither party dominates, and the PRD receives at least 40% of the vote.³²

Similarly, in eight counties, the electoral registry fails to register between 22.8% and 44.6% of eligible voters. Of these eight counties, one is predominantly PRI, three are predominantly PRD, and four are areas in which either party could win.³³ In one county with a 31.4% rate of registry exclusion, the margin of victory for the PRI in the recent election was 952 votes, or 3.6%. Significantly, in all but two of the eight counties indicated, the amount of non-registration is able to cover the PRI's margin of victory.

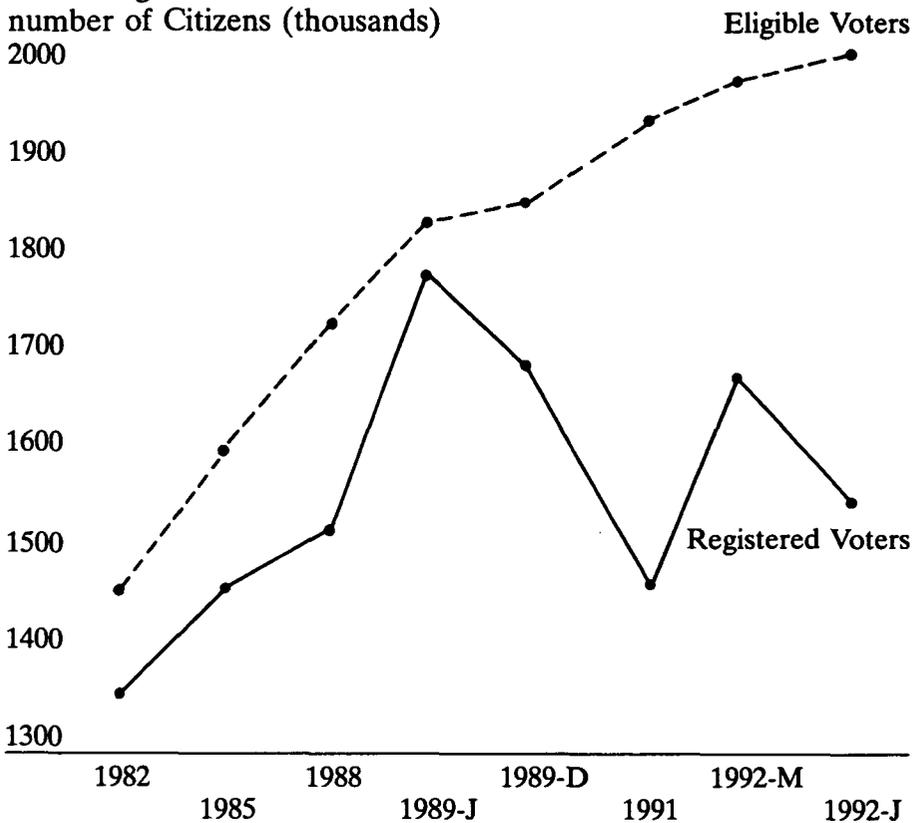
Finally, there is anecdotal evidence that the electoral institutions in the state manipulate the voter registry. Since the 1989 state election,³⁴ the voter registration list has shown a marked decline in the number of registered voters measured against the number of those who are eligible to vote.

31. GODINEZ, *supra* note 29, at 5.

32. Press conference held by Michoacán's *Consejo Estatal Electoral* ("CEE") at Morelia, Michoacán (July 23, 1992).

33. In the 1991 elections, the PRD received 40 to 49% of the vote.

34. The 1989 election was the first state election that actually measured the strength of the PRD with its victories in over half of the municipalities.

Voter Registration³⁵number of Citizens (thousands)
2000

(1989-J = July of 1989; 1989-D = December of 1989; 1992-M = May of 1991; 1992-J = July of 1992)

Problems surrounding the registration process in Mexico would be more conclusive if one could demonstrate that: (1) only opposition party supporters are excluded from the voter registry; (2) only they fail to receive their voter credential cards; or (3) in areas where the registry exceeds the number of eligible voters, extra voter credentials are given to PRI supporters who vote repeatedly. Although these practices have taken place in the past, elections in contested areas of Mexico are falling under increasing international scrutiny, and these kinds of activities, if they still occur, are much more closely guarded.

35. GODINEZ, *supra* note 29, at 6.

VI. CONCLUSION

Studying electoral fraud in Mexico has been almost a pastime for many researchers and journalists. Today, however, the kinds of obvious manipulations of the electoral system seem to be disappearing in favor of other forms of control. Most importantly, the PRI dominates its rivals with resources received and disbursed in its official capacity as the ruling members of the Government. Even if the process of voting was entirely free of errors or intentional manipulation, it would still be difficult to claim that the country was democratic. The framework of electoral competition is anything but legitimate.

At this point, it appears that the PRI is attempting to persuade the international community of its democratization by allowing victories by the PAN. Yet, the PRI uses virtually all means to annihilate its primary rival to the left, the PRD, which presents a much more fundamental challenge to the PRI's proposed reforms. In any case, the democratization of Mexico is not a foregone conclusion, nor is it obvious that the country is headed in this direction.