

**A House Divided Against Itself:  
The PRI's Survival After Hegemony\***

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\* A previous version was presented at the Conference “Learning to Lose: Adapting to Democracy in One-Party Dominant Systems”, March 31-April 1, 2006, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada. We thank the conference participants and Jorge Dominguez for useful comments. Of course all errors remain our own.

## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the transformation of the PRI and its survival dilemmas in the democratic era. The strength of the PRI lies in its capacity to win state-level elections. The transformation of nomination processes has allowed the PRI to pay closer attention to its local electorates. Governors in the contemporary era have access to enlarged fiscal federal transfers that were made available through fiscal decentralization. Fiscal decentralization has paradoxically been capitalized by PRI governors by enabling them to entrench themselves in power. Having lost the presidency and control of the vast resources in the federal bureaucracy that had traditionally been used to glue its coalition, the PRI faces formidable challenges to keep united. The main line of division within the PRI mirrors the tremendous regional disparities in the country.

# **A House Divided Against Itself: The PRI's Survival After Hegemony**

## **1. Introduction**

“If we do not win the big house, let us give up on the future of our political organization” (El Universal, March 2, 2006). With these words Roberto Madrazo, presidential candidate of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) in Mexico, expressed the uncertainty as to whether his political party, which kept hegemonic control of politics in the country during 71 years, would be able to survive into the democratic age, having control of the presidency. The PRI's performance in the 2006 election turned out to be a disaster: Madrazo came a distant third in the presidential race; his party lost many of the supposedly safe single-member district races in the federal legislature; and the PRI is no longer assured the so called “green vote” of poor peasants in the countryside. Nonetheless, the resilience of the party in the face of democratic competition is quite remarkable.

This paper explores the transformation of the PRI and its survival dilemmas in the democratic era. Mexico unambiguously transitioned to democracy in 2000 once the PRI lost the presidential race, recognizing its defeat.<sup>1</sup> At the time political observers and scholars were divided in their forecasts about the fate of the PRI. Some believed the party would not be able to survive democracy. Others believed that since the party retained a formidable machine in vast areas of the country and still controlled the corporatist organizations and the vast majority of executive posts (governorships and mayoralities), it would be able to survive and perhaps make a comeback in the 2006 elections. The first

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<sup>1</sup> The timing of Mexico's transition to democracy is somewhat problematic. The PRI had won a clean and relatively fair election in 1994, and had already lost control of the federal legislature since 1997, but alternation in executive power provides a clear threshold to qualify the country as democratic (see Przeworski et. al. 2000).

scenario was one of collapse of the traditional political system, similar to what occurred to the Christian Democrats in Italy; the second scenario looked more like the reconstitution of Communist Parties in many countries in Eastern Europe.

The PRI failed to regain control of the presidency in the 2006 elections. Its showing in the single member districts of the Congressional election was the worst in its history. But the party is not dead. In this paper we argue that the PRI is alive and strong, although it faces a real danger to disintegrate. The strength of the PRI, we demonstrate, lies in its capacity to win state-level elections. Even after the presidential defeat in 2000, the PRI continues to be the strongest party at the subnational level. The electoral success of the PRI at the local level results from a combination of factors. The democratic era has witnessed a transformation of nomination processes -- the central leadership has gradually been displaced in favor of local-level party conventions and primary elections -- and this has allowed the PRI to pay closer attention to its local electorates. Furthermore, governors in the contemporary era have access to enlarged fiscal federal transfers that were made available through fiscal decentralization, which originally was a by-product of the democratization process. Formerly given as a pay-off to obtain the cooperation of the long-standing opposition party, the PAN (National Action Party), fiscal decentralization has paradoxically been capitalized by PRI governors to entrench themselves in power. As a consequence of all of these processes, power within the PRI has dramatically shifted from the national leadership to the governors<sup>2</sup> and the local electoral machines' rank-and-file.

The future of the PRI, however, hinges upon its ability to keep on winning local and national elections, including the presidential race. To win local elections the party

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<sup>2</sup> A point made quite presciently by Trejo, 1999.

must be able to field candidates that can command popular support among traditional PRI electoral machines, while appealing to moderate voters primarily interested in government performance, particularly in the cities, who have become decisive in the state races. To win national elections, the PRI must be able to accommodate a very heterogeneous set of actors, most notably the governors and their local electoral machines. Having lost the presidency and unitary control of the vast resources in the federal bureaucracy that had traditionally been used to glue its coalition, the PRI faces formidable challenges to keep united. What are the factors that keep the PRI winning local elections, while pulling the national PRI apart?

In this paper we answer this fundamental question. The analysis we present, supports our claim that the contemporary PRI is fundamentally a collection of highly entrenched governors. We then proceed to systematically assess the dynamics of internal party factionalism and the variables that lead governors to fall in one faction or another. In line with conventional wisdom, we identify two main factions within the PRI, a left-wing populist faction and a liberal, free-market one. We depart from most analyses, however, in tracing factionalism to ideological divisions. Instead, we argue that these policy-divisions result from regionalism, and in particular, from the socioeconomic characteristics of the politician's state, including how well the local economy performed during the years of Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI); the state's economic performance during the more recent years of structural adjustment and market reforms; and, its exposure to international trade. The main line of division within the PRI thus mirrors the tremendous regional disparities in the country and constitutes a serious

impediment that prevents the national party organization from aggregating interests and articulating a coherent national agenda.

The paper is organized as follows. The first section presents a general background of the PRI as it pertains to the roles of governors and factions during the hegemonic period. The second section analyzes the electoral resilience of the contemporary PRI looking at the party's capacity to win state level elections. The third section discusses the transformation of the nomination procedures within the PRI that bolstered the party's decentralization and the devolution of power from the national party leadership to the governors, the state-level rank-and-file, and the local electorates. The fourth section discusses the problem of internal divisions within the *national* PRI. We end with a conclusion.

## **2. The hegemonic rule by the PRI**

The PRI was able to put together a regional and functional coalition which ruled Mexico from 1929 to 2000. The regime, although clearly autocratic, was more benign than any of the dictatorships in the rest of Latin America, and the political system was remarkably stable. During those long years of hegemony the party was able to easily win elections, only resorting to electoral fraud as an exceptional device. Before the 1980s, the party usually won, with hefty margins of victory, all state, municipal, and congressional elections.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The literature on the Mexican PRI is quite vast. A good classic account of the workings of the party is provided by Brandenburg, 1964. On electoral politics during PRI hegemony see Molinar, 1991. On Mexican electoral behavior in the democratic era see Moreno, 2003. For the democratization process from various angles see Dominguez and McCann, 1996; Dominguez and Poire, 1999; Lawson, 2002; Dominguez and Lawson, 2004; Middlebrook, 2004; Eisenstadt, 2004; and Magaloni, 2006. Good introductory accounts are Camp, 1999; Levy and Bruhn, 2001; and Preston and Dillon, 2004.

The central pillar of the PRI regime was its monopolization of mass support (Magaloni, 2006). Mass support was obtained through a combination of factors including economic performance; the distribution of material rewards at the time of the elections – everything from land titles to subsidized credit, construction materials, and food baskets – and the mobilization of voters through the party’s wide-reaching clientelistic networks. The PRI resorted to the mobilization of mass support much before elections became competitive in the 1980s as a means to deter elite opponents, most fundamentally those coming from within the ruling party (Magaloni, 2006). During the hegemonic era, the key vulnerability of the PRI was internal party divisions coming from disgruntled politicians who were denied the party’s nominations. Major splits occurred in 1940, 1946, 1952 and 1987 when powerful politicians who did not obtain the presidential nomination opted to challenge the PRI for the presidential race as opposition. The 1987 split was different from previous ones because it resulted in the formation of a new political party, the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). Through the mobilization of mass support, the PRI aspired to generate an image of invincibility. As long as the population kept on supporting the ruling party, ambitious politicians could anticipate no hope of achieving office and access to government spoils if they exited the hegemonic coalition.

Ideological divisions existed within the PRI since it was created in 1929. However, ideology has never fit well into any standard account of the PRI, as perhaps should be expected of a party founded on revolutionary ideals refashioned into the populist and corporatist creed that held reign during its long passage in power. Once hegemony was fully established, in the 1950s, a cohesive ideology could not account for so broad a coalition of support nor so virtually monolithic a political organization.

Indeed, the driving force behind PRI dominance was usually hailed as its pragmatism, adjusting policy to evolving changes in national and international conditions.

Scholars focusing on the study of factions rarely underscored ideology as a possible source of internal party divisions. Factional disputes were taken to be power struggles among personalistic cliques or *camarillas* (Smith, 1979; Langston, 1994) embedded within party organizations and government bureaucracies, awaiting the turn of the wheel of fortune in the presidential and gubernatorial sweepstakes and accommodating the latest ideological fashions of the politicians at the top. Figuring prominently among the cliques were those known as *cacicazgos*, dynastic political clans concentrated in particular states which have survived decades of political turnover within the ruling party. The twists and turns of this process were schematized as the “pendular theory” of presidential change over time which entailed changes in ideological shading according to the impact of presidential (and gubernatorial) succession on the configuration of interests within the party.

Another feature of Mexican autocracy was that it held regular elections, at all levels of government, since 1918. Although there was undoubtedly a large degree of centralization of political power in the hands of the president, state elections were a crucial feature explaining the stability of this political arrangement (Diaz-Cayeros, 2006; Diaz-Cayeros and Langston, 2006). Federalism afforded politicians at the local level the possibility of pursuing attractive political careers in their states, enjoying the benefits of federal resources and national organizations to mobilize political support.

The PRI has always been a highly heterogeneous governing coalition of entrenched governors and local politicians; professional bureaucrats who followed their

careers at the federal level; and officials from the party's corporatist institutions, including the CTM (Confederation of Mexican Workers) and CNC (Confederation of Mexican Peasants). Ambition and rent-seeking rather than a common ideology were the cement that kept the heterogeneous coalition united for so long. All major politicians in the country remained within the PRI because this was the only party that presented a real possibility of being elected to office or acquiring a bureaucratic position, both of which offered liberal access to government spoils and ample opportunities to do business under the umbrella of the state. During the hegemonic era the PRI managed to successfully balance the interests of such dissimilar groups by distributing legislative positions among the major corporatist organizations and the governors in a more or less proportional basis.

The 1980s witnessed a redistribution of power within the PRI. As it became clearer that the CTM and the CNC were unable to effectively respond to the electoral challenges of the PRD and the PAN, the PRI began to redistribute power away from the functional organizations in favor of the governors. After 1988 almost half the members of the federal cabinets had been governors. Furthermore, during the 1990s, the CTM and the CNC began to lose their traditional shares of legislative seats within the federal Congress.

The redistribution of power from the center to the states became even more dramatic after the PRI lost the presidency in 2000. The PRI's most important leaders during the democratic era have all emerged from the ranks of sitting and former governors, not from the federal bureaucracies or the corporatist organizations. In fact, as we further discuss in this paper, the strength of governors, and their ascendant role since the 1990s, explain the PRI's capacity to survive democracy after its defeat in 2000.

### **3. Devolving power to the states: fiscal decentralization and the transformation of nomination processes**

The era of party hegemony was characterized by an impressive centralization of power. During the era of party hegemony, the fiscal federal arrangement witnessed an impressive centralization (Diaz-Cayeros, 2006). The national government controlled most of the economic resources, which meant that state politicians had virtually no leeway to determine spending decisions. Governors depended on the center's largesse to finance social development projects, infrastructure and public works, and administrative expenses. Public investment was highly skewed in favor of some states and cities, most notably Mexico City.

During the more competitive era, the PRI was able to employ this fiscal centralization to its advantage. It undermined the opposition by systematically diverting fiscal resources from states and municipalities controlled by these parties and rewarding its own with more funds (Rodríguez, 1997; Diaz-Cayeros et al, 2005; Magaloni, 2006). Without access to federal fiscal transfers, opposition governments faced enormous challenges to govern and build solid party organizations at the local level.

The distribution of funds from the federation to the states is governed by formulas that were negotiated between the states and the federation within a "federal fiscal pact", the National System of Fiscal Coordination. These formulas were originally drafted in 1980 to compensate rich states for the loss of revenue resulting from the introduction of a national Value Added Tax (VAT). Gradually, the formulas evolved in such a way that poorer states, where the PRI is stronger, receive increasing shares. After 1993, the federal government devolved to the states education expenditure and a few years later, funds for

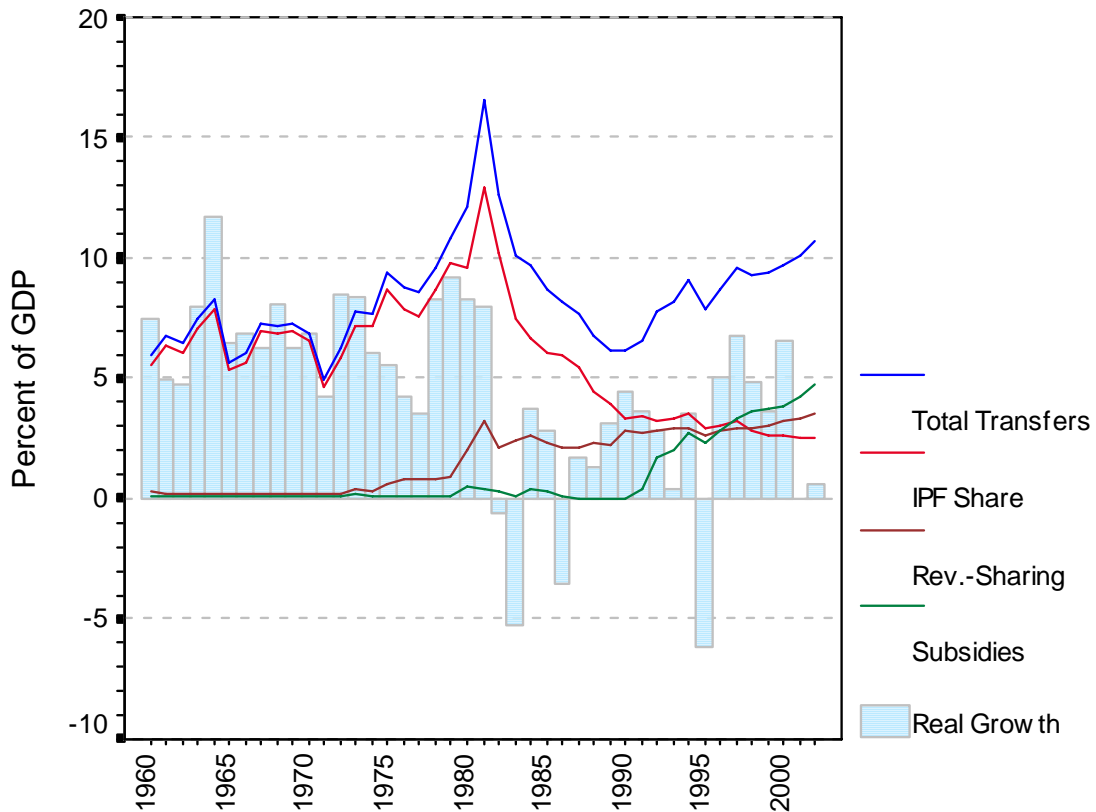
health and basic municipal infrastructure were decentralized. By 1998, the various subsidies granted by the federal government to finance the provision of public goods and services in the states were incorporated into the National System of Fiscal Coordination. Subsidies are supposed to be earmarked and conditioned in their use to further federal priorities. However, in practice, states have ample leeway to allocate them.

Revenue sharing funds are the other major federal funds that states can spend with discretion. When the PRI lost the majority in the Chamber of Deputies in 1997, it was forced to build coalitions with other political parties to pass legislation, mainly with the PAN. This party, for example, conditioned its support of the budget on more transfers and programs to the localities.

Figure 1 reports the evolution of federal transfers to the states from 1960 until the present. We report total federal transfers, federal public investment (IPF), revenue sharing funds, and subsidies as a percentage of the states' average GNP. We also report the average real growth of transfers to the states in per capita terms. Except for the years of the oil boom in the late 1970s, there are significantly more resources to the states in the democratic era. Most of the increase after 1995 comes from revenue sharing funds and subsidies. Hence, a key difference in the contemporary period is that governors have virtually a free hand to use those resources at will, which was not true of funds in the 1980s. A paradoxical result of the fiscal decentralization that came about as a concession to the PAN is that PRI governors have been able to employ the increased resources to entrench themselves in power even after this party lost the presidency in 2000.

Figure 1

## Evolution of Federal Resource Transfers



Another distinctive trait of the democratic era is the democratization of nomination processes within the PRI. During the 1990s, the PRI gradually moved away from its highly undemocratic nomination procedures where the national leadership and the president played a key role in the nomination of candidates at all levels of government to open conventions and primaries. Starting with competitive party conventions (with delegates selected by Athenian lottery), president Ernesto Zedillo proceeded to introduce open primary elections for the selection of about half of his party's gubernatorial candidates, and then to extend the use of the open primary to the selection of the PRI's presidential candidate in 1999. Since then, primaries have

produced about 40 percent of PRI's candidates for governor in the Fox years. In addition, an open national election was held in early 2002 for the party presidency and a repeat performance of the presidential primary was botched in late 2005 by the abrupt withdrawal of one of the major contenders for the nomination, due to a burgeoning corruption scandal.

In general, consensus exists on the rapid decentralization of party politics, even before the PRI's loss of the presidency, with local rank-and-file and local electorates becoming increasingly decisive in the fate of politicians contending for their party's nomination (Poiré, 2002; Diaz-Cayeros and Langston, 2005). Less agreement is apparent with respect to the motives behind that decentralization. One line of research argues that external competition has forced the PRI to seek candidates anchored in local electoral politics in order to meet the challenge posed by rival parties. Another emphasizes that the pluralism within many state chapters of the PRI, with power and resources widely dispersed among different political contenders, has tied the leadership's hands in recruitment and forced it to open the local process of candidate selection, lest one or several of those contenders bolt the party altogether.

The data on gubernatorial nomination rules employed by the PRI since 1994, and separated by presidential administration, is displayed in Table 1. The columns report the method by which the local PRI selected its gubernatorial candidate - an open convention, a centralized procedure of endorsing a "unity candidate" or an open primary. In the rows, we indicate the number of elections for which these procedures have been employed; whether the election took place in a state where the PRI was the incumbent or the opposition; if a local party split took place prior to the election and whether the PRI won.

In the Zedillo years, the early introduction of competitive party conventions was soon abandoned, given their bleak record in the wake of the 1995 recession. Primaries introduced in 1998 proved better harbingers of victory in the general election, while the centralized procedure of producing a “unity candidate” was accompanied by notable losses later on. However, neither primaries nor leadership imposition were particularly effective in stemming defections of important politicians and state-level splits in the PRI. In seven of the ten cases of PRI splits between 1994 and 2000, losing contenders went on to head major opposition tickets, producing five gubernatorial losses for the PRI.

**Table 1: Gubernatorial Races, Party Splits and Nomination Rules**

	Open Convention	Unity Candidate	Open Primary
<b>Zedillo Term</b> (1995-2000)			
N° Elections	3	16	15
PRI/non-PRI State	2 – 1	14 – 2	13 - 2
State Party Splits	0	5	5
Win/Loss Record	0 – 3	9 – 7	10 - 5
<b>Fox Term</b> (2001-2005)			
N° Elections	7	10	11
PRI/non-PRI State	7 – 0	6 – 4	7 - 4
State Party Splits	4	5	5
Win/Loss Record	6 – 1	3 – 7	8 - 3

After the Fox triumph in 2000, the PRI has continued to diversify its nomination rules, recuperating party conventions especially in states safely in its pocket. Overall, the

competitive procedures of conventions and primaries have clearly been more successful, in electoral terms, than the non-competitive method that dominated candidate selection for decades in that party. After 2002, most of the leadership impositions involve coalitions with the Greens (PVEM) and other minor parties, which under current election law permit recentralization of candidate selection even against local party statutes mandating some level of open competition. Again, in the matter of defections, none of the methods has managed to deter disloyalty.

Splits, major and minor, have thus become more common than before, rising from one third of the PRI's state parties affected through 2000 to one half since then. Of the fourteen splits since 2000, six have involved the turncoat candidacies of losing or discarded contenders from the PRI who went on to head a major rival's ticket, but only one loss of a governorship was generated by those defections.

#### **4: Surviving democracy: the PRI's entrenched governors**

Despite the impressive number of defections that the PRI has experienced in recent years, this party has been able to survive as the strongest electoral force in the states. Thus, the resilience of the PRI in the democratic era must be understood as a function of its ability to retain and win gubernatorial elections. In this section we explore the magnitude of the PRI's incumbency advantage in state elections.

The first loss of a gubernatorial election conceded by the PRI occurred in 1989, in Baja California.<sup>4</sup> From that year until 2005, ninety nine gubernatorial contests have been

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<sup>4</sup> The party lost a gubernatorial race in Nayarit in the 1970s, but the leader of the Partido Auténtico de la Revolución Mexicana (PARM), Jorge Cruikshank, negotiated to exchange that victory for a Senate seat. It is very likely that the party lost several other gubernatorial races to the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) but resorted to electoral fraud, most infamously in Chihuahua in 1986.

held, in which the PRI has emerged victorious two out of every three races. Although the party's support has been eroding for decades, the PAN and the PRD have not been able to win in a large number of states where the PRI is still safely entrenched. Even broad opposition coalitions against the incumbent have largely failed. For example, in the gubernatorial elections of 2004 in Tamaulipas and Oaxaca, the PRI won despite facing a unified opposition. While the margin of victory in Oaxaca was slim (slightly under 3 percent), the one in Tamaulipas was staggering (27 percent).

The support for the PRI is quite high in the seventeen states it governs. As Figure 2 illustrates, in spite of the precipitous drop in PRI support, particularly after the entry of opposition governors after 1989, the party has been able to keep its support at around 50 percent since the late 1990s. And even in those states where the party has lost to the PAN, the PRD, or to a coalition of both parties (the graph attributes the coalition executive to the strongest party in the state), its average support remains above 33 percent. In a three way race a third of the electorate still represents a rather high level of support.

## Support for the PRI by Partisanship of the Governor

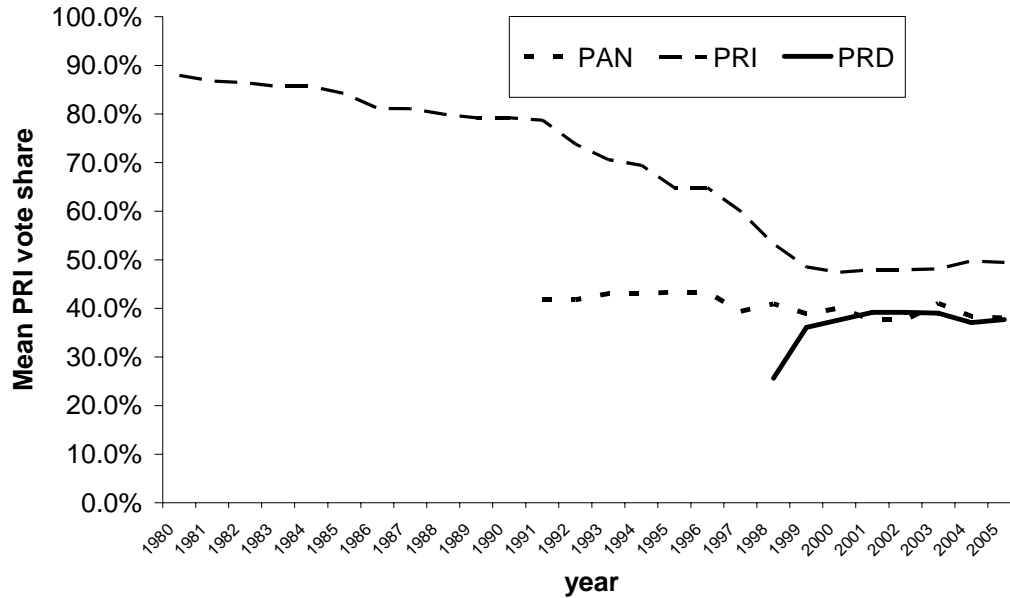


Figure 2

The resilience of the PRI is directly related to its capacity to retain several states as very safe bastions. But another part of the story is the capacity of the party to win elections, under democratic rules, and even when it has lost a particular state before. A way to understand this process is to summarize the patterns of gubernatorial elections through a mobility matrix. The matrix depicted in table 2 shows the partisanship of governors from one election to the next, between 1989 and 2005.<sup>5</sup> The way to read table 2 is to consider first the shaded diagonal cells. During the period from 1989 to 2005, the PAN has been able to retain the governorship in 7 of the states it governed, while losing reelection in three. The PRD has kept power in 3 states, while losing control in one. The

<sup>5</sup> The mobility matrix is constructed assigning coalitions to the strongest party in the state or to which the candidate was most closely associated with.

PRI has maintained its incumbent status in 64 states, while losing the governorship to rivals in sixteen.

**Table 2: Mobility matrix of gubernatorial elections 1989-2005**

Previous election:	Next Election:		
	PAN	PRI	PRD
PAN	7	3	0
PRI	10	64	6
PRD	1	0	3

What the matrix tells us in words is that all three parties have about a 3-in-4 chance of retaining their governorships, although the PRI (with odds of 80%) enjoys a small but important advantage over its rivals. This opens possibilities for the PRI to recover lost states. In addition, the probability of defeating the PRI is somewhat higher for the PAN than for the PRD.

With these basic -and admittedly somewhat superficial- elements, one can construct scenarios of how an initial distribution might evolve through time. This is done by turning the mobility matrix into transition probabilities applied in a Markov chain process. The matrix can hence depict the probabilities of parties moving among the various cells from time  $t$  to time  $t+1$ , assuming such matrix characterizes a relatively stable process. Through a simple matrix multiplication, those transition probabilities can be applied to the initial distribution of governorships, in order to obtain an expected distribution over the long term. Technically this is the steady state distribution of the Markov chain process.

Table 3 provides some scenarios calculated through the mobility matrix of the possible distribution of governorships held by each party under various assumptions. The first row simply reports the percentage of governorships held by each party (again, assuming that when the candidate is the product of a coalition, he should be attributed to the strongest party in the state). If the Markov chain is applied several times to that initial vector, it yields a long term distribution (i.e. the steady state) in which the PRI holds around half of the governorships, the PRD controls three states and the PAN takes the rest, which is reported in the second row.

It is possible that the transition probabilities calculated since 1989 give a disproportionate chance to the PRI of winning states, so one can do the same exercise, but using a transition matrix only with the elections since 1995. Calculations for the partisanship of the state executives with that matrix are reported in the last two rows of the table. Those calculations still allocate over the long term almost 40 percent of the governorships to the PRI.

**Table 3. Percentage of governorships held by each party**

	PAN	PRI	PRD
As of 2005	0.28	0.53	0.19
Markov chain since 1989			
long term	0.42	0.47	0.11
Markov chain since 1995			
long term	0.48	0.38	0.14

One could argue that these transition matrixes are not really valid ways to infer the possible strength of the PRI in future elections because they do not take into account the specific circumstances of each individual state race. Hence, an additional way to assess the party's capabilities is to estimate the probability that the PRI can retain office in individual states, given the political configuration of competition and its incumbency status.

Table 4 estimates the probability of a PRI victory in the 1989-2005 period. The analysis takes into account at most three elections of a given state, and controls for the incumbency of the PRI. As independent variables in the first column we use the incumbency status of the PRI (*prigov*), and the electoral support received by the party (*privote*). The variable *prigov* estimates a conditional probability akin to the diagonal cell in the mobility matrix. The vote support for the party, however, controls for the popularity of the party in each state, in each election, which might be the consequence of a host of voter choice variables. We carry our estimation based purely on the political aspects of the elections, without introducing socioeconomic variables. Although it is clear that socioeconomic variables influence voting patterns in each state, one can use the electoral support to determine the probability of PRI victory, and thus control for an omitted set of complex socioeconomic variables that determine voting patterns in each state. In a rich state, for example, it is likely that the PRI will enjoy lower levels of support, but we do not need to introduce income or wealth, since vote shares can proxy such controls. Of course, when support is greater than 50 percent, the PRI is certain to win the election. The point, however, is that the party can also win the election with

lower levels of support, depending on the configuration of partisan support for all competitors.

**Table 4. Estimates of probability of PRI victory 1989-2005**

	(1)	(2)	(3)
C	-9.69 (2.05)	10.82 (4.05)	11.97 (2.97)
Prigov	1.13 (0.61)	1.94 (0.79)	1.68 (0.64)
Privote	20.29 (4.39)		
Prdvote		-42.34 (11.05)	-23.70 (5.51)
Panvote		-43.53 (11.24)	-25.47 (5.86)
Pricoal		1.32 (0.87)	1.07 (0.63)
NP		4.23 (1.22)	
Oppcoal			-2.52 (1.09)
N	99	99	99
Chi 2	71.2	97.99	84.76
Pseudo R2	0.56	0.78	0.67

Note: All coefficients statistically significant at the 99 percent level, except those for pricoal and popcoal, which are only significant at the 90 percent level.

The first estimation in table 4 is a minimal specification in which the probability of victory is simply proportional to the vote share the PRI was able to mobilize and its incumbency status. Not surprisingly this estimation yields a relatively high pseudo R2 and significant coefficients. At its average level of political support this estimation tells us that if the PRI is not the incumbent, it still has a 69 percent chance of winning the election. If the party is the incumbent, the probability of victory jumps to 94 percent.

In order to gain better insight into the meaning of the estimation regarding the vote shares, it is useful to provide the simulated probabilities of victory by vote share.

Figure 3 suggests that the PRI is unlikely to recover a previously lost state, denoted by the firm line, unless its vote share is close to 50 percent. However, in places where the PRI is the incumbent, denoted by the dotted line, it is likely to win even with vote shares in the 40 percent range. The gap between the two lines represents the incumbency advantage for the party.

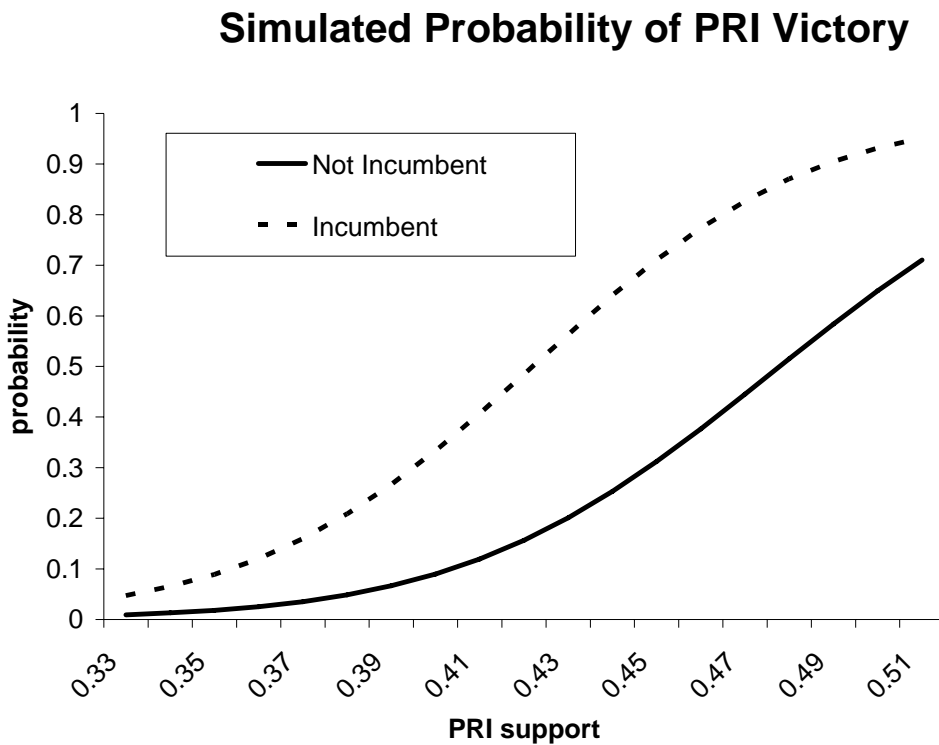


Figure 3

Although the first estimation in table 4 already provides some insight into the value of incumbency, the analysis of the next two estimations (columns 2 and 3) allows us to understand, on the one hand, whether the PRD or the PAN have posed a greater threat to the PRI and, on the other, whether coalition behavior between its major rivals has played any role in the PRI's electoral fate. Column 2 reports an estimation using vote shares for the PAN and PRD (support for the PRI cannot be used simultaneously). If the

PRI faces a greater challenge from one of those parties the coefficient should be larger. The estimation also includes a dummy variable for whether the PRI ran in a given state with a coalition. And it controls for the effective number of candidates running in each state election. This last indicator can provide an idea of whether voters or politicians have been able to coordinate, forcing a Duvergerian equilibrium (Cox, 1997) with a smaller number of candidates, and hence a greater challenge to the PRI.

The estimation in column 2 reveals three findings. First, the estimated coefficients for PRD and PAN are virtually the same. This means that the PRI does not find one party or the other more challenging. This is somewhat surprising given that the PAN has been able to win more elections than the PRD. But what this means is that the better performance of the PAN compared to the PRD is explained by its differential levels of support across states. Second, the estimation shows that the PRI can boost its probabilities of winning by forging electoral coalitions with other, much smaller parties, most notably the PVEM (the Greens).<sup>6</sup> Third, the variable measuring the effective number of candidates suggests that the PRI is more likely to win when it faces a fragmented opposition. That is, when there are more candidates running, a smaller vote share can allow the PRI to claim victory. Moreover, a divided opposition probably competes with each other for votes, rather than taking support solely from the PRI. That same point is made more directly by the last estimation in column 3. When the PAN and

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<sup>6</sup> This is partly endogenous, to the extent that the party enters coalitions in races which it expects to be very close. However, we should note that (unreported) estimates showed that the prior margin of victory is a very poor predictor of success. And the prior margin was not a good predictor of the PRI pursuing a coalition. An ex ante margin of victory, before the actual election takes place but after the elections six years before would make a good instrument to perform a two stage estimation of the effect of the PRI coalitions. However, there are not enough publicly available state level opinion polls before state elections that would allow for such estimation.

the PRD have successfully crafted a coalition against the PRI, the latter is more likely to lose the election.

In order to get an idea of the dimension of the effects involved in the coalitional dynamics, one can simulate the probability of victory for the PRI for various scenarios by changing the value of the independent variables. If all the independent variables are set at their mean value, taking the estimation in column 3, the probability of victory for the PRI is 97 percent. That is, the PRI is virtually guaranteed to keep on winning state elections if all states were like the average state. But of course there is no such thing as an average state. Instead, the most crucial distinction between states after 1989 is whether the PRI is the incumbent, and when it is not, its probability of winning falls by 27 points. The effect of coalitions is, nonetheless, rather large.

Even if a state is governed by the PRI, if that party faces a unified opposition, the probability of winning is only a coin toss (50.4 percent).<sup>7</sup> But the estimate also shows that the PRI can also use coalitions in its favor: if it runs a candidate in coalition with the PVEM, even facing a unified front of the PRD and the PAN, its probability of winning jumps back to 75 percent.

## **5. The ideological basis of factionalism within the *national* PRI**

Thus far we have depicted the PRI as a highly decentralized collection of entrenched governors, who have an impressive ability to win elections in part thanks to the decentralization of federal transfers. However, the ability of the PRI to survive as a national party capable of winning federal elections will hinge, first upon its ability to coordinate its local electoral machines, and second, on its capacity to keep the

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<sup>7</sup> This is a less reliable estimate given that the standard errors are somewhat large.

heterogeneous coalition united. This section explores factionalism within the *national* PRI. Our analysis systematically traces the source of internal party divisions to policy divisions embedded in socio-structural conditions of the politicians' local economies.

Many pundits and scholars have noted that the greatest challenge to the contemporary PRI lies in the possibility of splits that could lead to massive defections of its voters, its rank-and-file and its politicians to other parties. The specter of the 1987 factional split led by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, who later founded the PRD as the main leftwing opposition party, clearly inspires this premonition. In the mid-1980s, this faction strenuously objected to the social costs inflicted by stabilization policies and structural reform of the economy, made possible by the authoritarian features of party hegemony and extreme concentration of power in the presidency (see Bruhn for the fullest account).

In the wake of the collapse of the Mexican political economy in 1982 and of drastic measures of structural adjustment and reform thereafter, the reference to ideological divisions among the PRI's political elite became prevalent. Ideologically-motivated factions within the PRI coalition were discerned by Centeno (1994) and Domínguez (1996), in reference to conflicts between the technocrats that dominated government and the politicians that dominated the ruling party, both factions standing where they sat. Most famously, President Carlos Salinas repeatedly referred to this division as one between the liberal, modernizing reformers and the vast "nomenklatura" of conservative statist, populists, defensive nationalists, corporatists and die-hard authoritarians (Salinas, 2000). This frontal opposition within the PRI did not abate with the consolidation of the PRD on the left, firmly outside the "revolutionary family." To

the contrary, it is presumably the persistent source, to this day, of a steady stream of small-scale defections from the PRI by politicians suffering from frustrated careers as well as ideological displacement.

Through the Salinas term, however, there was little systematic evidence that ideological factions mattered for policy and governance beyond the PRI élite itself. Aside from general elections pitting the ruling party's reformers and anti-reformers alike against their shared opposition, there were no factional contests within the PRI that could serve as indicators of the levels of partisan support for either side of that ideological divide. This changed abruptly with the onset of Ernesto Zedillo's term as president in late 1994. Innovations imposed by Zedillo on selection procedures for candidates to office progressively opened the PRI's internal politics to public scrutiny and participation.

After ten years of rules changes opening up the once mysterious ways of political recruitment within the PRI, that party is today the one with the most exposure to rank-and-file as well as voter sentiment. And for that reason, it is today possible to assess the impact of policy-based and ideological divisions within the PRI. In the rest of this paper, we will explore the evidence available in the hope of explaining factionalism within the contemporary national PRI and linking it to ideological divisions which are voter and policy-driven. At the same time, our analysis will seek to highlight the role played by governors and regional coalitions in the open warfare that now characterizes internal politics in the former ruling party.

### *5.1 The politics of factions behind national leadership selection*

To study ideological factionalism within the PRI, we focus on national intra-party contests for high office and leadership positions. The open presidential primary in 1999, the open party-leadership race in 2002 and the presidential nomination process in 2005 were accompanied by intense mobilization of rank-and-file throughout the country, intense news coverage of the races, heavy media campaigns that saturated airwaves, televised debates in some cases, and the plentiful production of opinion surveys and exit polls.

Since all of these contests involved the electoral fate of Roberto Madrazo, who lost the 1999 race but won the later ones, common wisdom has ascribed the contests to power struggles among party heavyweights and their political coteries. Since a prominent role in all three processes was played by sitting and former governors, speculation has abounded about the personal and factional ambitions of these players.

Their front-stage-center role is beyond doubt. Three of the four contenders, including the two frontrunners, in the 1999 primary were governors (Labastida from Sinaloa, Madrazo from Tabasco, and Bartlett from Puebla). In addition, a “syndicate” of governors from the eastern and southern regions routinely met with Bartlett and Madrazo in 1998, helping to pressure the national leadership into opening up the nomination process for the following year. The leadership race in 2002 featured two former Governors as rival candidates (Madrazo again and Paredes from Tlaxcala), with many sitting governors maneuvering noisily in favor of one or the other. In early 2005, a group of sitting governors (mostly from northern states like Nuevo León, Sonora, Coahuila, Tamaulipas and Sinaloa, but also including the executives from Hidalgo, Veracruz and

the State of Mexico) formed an alliance, known colloquially as TUCOM (“Todos Unidos Contra Madrzo - All United Against Madrazo”), whose singular purpose was to engineer an alternative nomination process within the PRI capable of producing a candidate strong enough to wrest control of the party and the presidential nomination from Madrazo. In the end, the alliance chose Arturo Montiel, the governor of the State of Mexico, as its standard-bearer, but his candidacy aborted in the fall when charges of corruption against him and his family hit the airwaves.

What these three episodes share are relatively similar regional alignments extending across presidential and gubernatorial administrations. Backing first Labastida, then Paredes and later Montiel, were governors and eventually voters from the northern and central regions of the country. Backing Madrazo in all three races were those from the South and Southeast.

While the regionalism of these factions has long been recognized, it has not, to our knowledge, been dissected and explained by systematic analysis. The survey research accumulated on the topic of the PRI’s party contests is of one voice concerning the underlying ideological dimensions of factional alliances and contestation. In a nutshell, it finds no evidence of issue-voting among PRI supporters, regardless of the faction or candidate winning their votes. One study on the congressional budget battle of 1997 found no evidence of internal cleavages among PRI voters on fiscal controversies concerning the size of government and redistribution (Estévez and Magaloni, 2000). Numerous studies on the 1999 presidential primary arrived at similar results (see Estévez and Moreno, 2002; Estévez and Poiré, 2001; Moreno, 2003; and Méndez, 2003). Neither self-placement on the left-right spectrum, nor issue positions on privatization of the

electric energy industry, nor even intensity of identification with the PRI tapped differences in voting choice in the primary. Some retrospective evaluations such as presidential approval clearly distinguished Labastida and Madrazo backers, but this could be interpreted as endogenous to the ins-vs.-outs nature of the primary contest touted by both of the major contenders' primary campaigns. Aside from this factor, only issues stemming from the campaign itself (negativity overload) and the quality or fairness of the primary (expectations of vote-rigging) defined cleavages among the backers of either candidate.

That the contest resulted a divisive primary for the PRI, hurting the winning Labastida's prospects in the general election, is still an unsettled question (both Poiré, 2002 and Moreno and Pierce, 2002 substantiate this interpretation, but see McCann, 2004 for the opposing view). However, the lack of evidence for issue - or policy- voting has inclined the overall assessment of the primary race toward the view that PRI voter choices reflected the largely candidate-centered nature of the contest, while the geographic division of preferences followed a pattern of voters backing regional favorite sons.

A similar non-finding regarding the ideological bases of the vote applies to the much less studied election of party leadership held in February, 2002. As scripted by media coverage, this race pitted Paredes as a candidate of continuity in party direction against Madrazo, the insurgent representing the interests of party rank-and-file in a revolt from below. As with the earlier primary race, this match-up suggested that the two factions represented very different interests and policy commitments, extended into distinct regional cleavages. But no evidence whatever emerges from the (unreported)

analysis of the exit poll conducted on election day, that might make sense of Salinas's evocation of ideologically-based factionalism in the PRI at the turn of the century.

In what rests of this section, we take issue with the issueless view of factional politics within the PRI. Against the bulk of research on competitive nominations within the PRI, we argue that factionalism at the national level of party politics, sustained at least since the presidential primary of 1999, reflects the local political economy that state chapters of the PRI have inherited from their hegemonic past as well as the large variance in economic performance that the states have exhibited in the wake of economic breakdown and stabilization in the "lost decade" of the 1980s. To summarize the argument to be presented, the dynamics of growth in Mexico's regional economies in recent years are a function of how market-oriented, open to foreign trade and attractive to direct foreign investment they are. At one end of the spectrum we find states that are growing, highly integrated into the world economy, and market-oriented. At the other end of the continuum are state-driven local economies, largely closed to foreign trade and highly dependent on flows of federal public investment and other resource transfers from the center. We argue that these patterns are mirrored in the PRI's internal politics through alignment with one of the two national factions, with PRI politicians from states with state-driven economies allied to Madrazo since 1999 and those from more market-oriented states allied to his adversaries.

To substantiate these claims, below we turn to the analysis of another elective contest from 2003, involving the PRI's caucus in the Chamber of Deputies which split over the ouster and replacement of its leader, in a remarkable and very rare example of a

backbencher revolt in a traditionally cohesive, highly disciplined legislative party (Weldon, 2005).

### *5.2 The Caucus Leadership Fight in 2003*

On December 3, 2003, the caucus of the PRI voted to remove Elba Esther Gordillo from her leadership post and to replace her with Emilio Chauyffet, a former Governor of the State of Mexico. The unprecedented vote involved 117 out of the PRI's 222 deputies, but represented only a swing of 19 votes away from the majority backing her designation as congressional leader six months earlier. The issues at stake were telling. Gordillo had announced a congressional strategy of collaboration with the Fox administration in promoting structural reforms in public finance, education and the economy, most of which were opposed by a majority of the PRI coalition as evidenced by the platform changes wrought in the party assembly in 2001. Moreover, Gordillo was at the moment of her ouster negotiating an overhaul of value-added taxes for that year's revenue bill, which directly contradicted the policy pledge of the PRI in that summer's midterm elections to oppose any hikes in consumption taxes.

In 2002 Gordillo had run for the second most important office in the PRI, on the same ticket as Roberto Madrazo, winning through that alliance a tight election to the Secretary-General post. After Gordillo manifested her intention to back Vicente Fox, the Madrazo-Gordillo alliance fell apart and Madrazo explicitly backed the intention to remove her from her leadership position.

Taking advantage of the caucus vote in 2002,<sup>8</sup> we can estimate the likelihood of PRI members to withhold support from the Gordillo, as a proxy of the internal divisions in the party. Table 5 presents logistic estimations for that vote, controlling for a series of congressional and party organizational factors that may have tilted votes in favor or, or against, Gordillo's destitution.

**Table 5: Logistic Estimates of the Caucus Vote Against-Gordillo**

	(1)	(2)
C	-.167 (.386)	-1.132 (.384)
Female	-.784 (.462)	-.682 (.451)
Committee Chair	-2.312 (.766)	-2.450 (.754)
Party List Deputy	1.075 (.413)	1.282 (.425)
CTM Member	1.503 (.710)	1.673 (.728)
CNC Member	.756 (.384)	.656 (.395)
Orphan state	.817 (.403)	.939 (.407)
Upcoming state elections in 2004	.844 (.437)	.751 (.451)
State of Mexico	3.353 (.830)	4.430 (.908)
Durango	2.269 (1.192)	2.822 (1.202)
Veracruz	-3.345 (1.101)	-2.960 (1.099)
Margin FLO-RM, 1999	-2.617 (.704)	
Margin RM-BP, 2002		2.495 (.561)
N	222	222
Chi 2	79.696	85.292

<sup>8</sup> The identity of those voting to oust Gordillo is revealed in a widely circulated document which registers the signatures of those attending the caucus session in order to have legal proof of meeting the quorum requirement. Gordillo backers, with only three exceptions boycotted the meeting.

% Pred.	72.5	73.4
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Note: Robust Standard Errors in Parentheses

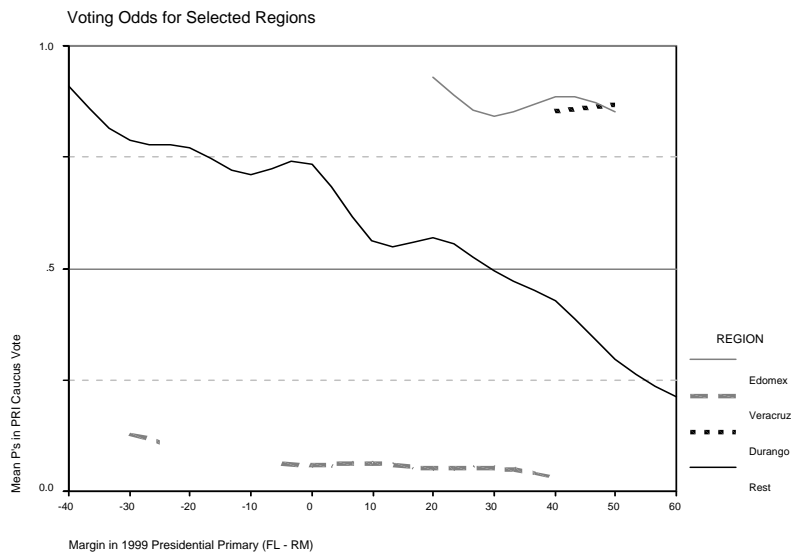
Women deputies, favored by Gordillo in committee assignments, and committee chairs appointed by Gordillo could be expected to oppose her removal. In the opposite direction, deputies whose careers depended upon the influence and patronage of party headquarters (the National Executive Committee headed by Madrazo) could be induced to vote against her. Accordingly, party list deputies chosen by the national party leadership, members of the corporatist labor and peasant sectors of the PRI, deputies from “orphan” state governed by the PRI’s rivals, and those from states with upcoming elections which might require financial transfers from the national party to help the state party compete more effectively, were good candidates for backing her replacement by a Madrazo ally.

The most important findings in the table, however, entail the strong effects of certain state delegations voting with near unanimity in one direction or the other and the equally strong impact of the district- and state-level results from the PRI’s national contests in 1999 and 2002 indicated by the last two independent variables in the table. Margin FLO-RM are the district-level margins of victory of Francisco Labastida over Roberto Madrazo in the primary election of 1999. Margin RM-BP are the margins of victory of Roberto Madrazo over Beatriz Paredes in the 2002 leadership race. The regional variation in the support for the Madrazo ticket in the 2002 election provides a convenient mapping of the internal divisions in the party, which matches to a fair degree the regional distribution exhibited in the 1999 primary race.

With respect to these latter variables, the home district margins in the primary race between Labastida and Madrazo robustly predict the vote choices for most deputies in the PRI caucus four years later, after two rounds of federal elections had intervened and the PRI had lost control of the presidency. The same is true for the home state margins in the 2002 leadership race between Madrazo and Paredes (shown in Model II in the table).

The effect of the 1999 primary results is illustrated in Figure 3, which shows the decreasing and nearly monotonic changes in probabilities for a vote against Gordillo, in line with the size of Labastida’s lead over Madrazo. In other words, members of the PRI caucus in 2003 voted according to the revealed factional preferences of the partisan core in their home districts and states.

Figure 4: Caucus Voting Odds According to 1999 Primary Results



There are three major exceptions. Deputies from the State of Mexico, whose PRI backers had heavily favored Labastida in 1999 and Paredes in 2002, rallied behind their former Governor to replace Gordillo. In addition, deputies from Durango voted *en bloc*

against Gordillo, with their Governor's alliance with Madrazo superceding their constituencies' vote against his faction in the two national races. In the opposite direction, the representatives from Veracruz voted almost unanimously in favor of Gordillo, in line with their Governor's factional preference and against the more divided results in 1999 (and 2002) in their home districts. No other state delegations strayed far from their constituencies' preferences, nor did other PRI governors.

The regional variation in factional support, revealed in the national races in 1999 and 2002 and reaffirmed by the caucus vote in 2003, is tied, of course, to the policy issues prominently debated in the PRI caucus and more vaguely treated in the earlier campaigns for high office. Factional politics within the PRI, then, turn on the ideological divide trumpeted by Salinas ten and more years before. The conflicts between modernizers and traditionalists, liberals and populist-statists, are cleanly reflected in regional differences in factional alignment, rooted not merely in the alliances among the party's politicians but more deeply in the voting choices of the PRI's core constituencies across the country.

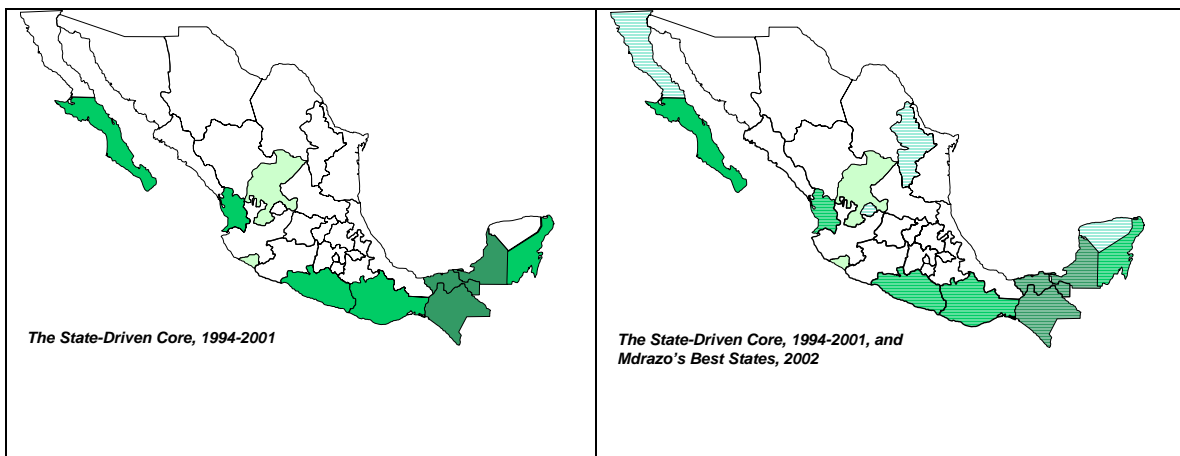
To see this more clearly, we can categorize states as being characterized by a market-driven or a state-driven development strategy. The allocation of states into the polar categories of state- versus market-driven economies is simply a separation into three blocks of state economies by their average level of trade openness over the period 1998-2000 (see [aregional.com](http://aregional.com) for these and other state-level economic data). States with low exposure to trade also tend to enjoy high levels of federal transfers per capita and, especially, of public federal investment, above all, in the oil and tourism sectors; at the same time, they obtain very meager flows of direct foreign investment. In the period

since the economic collapse of 1982, these state-driven economies have generated the lowest rates of economic growth on average within the country.

At the other end of this continuum, market-driven state economies have very high levels of exposure to trade, enjoy strong flows of foreign investment and receive relatively low levels of federal transfers. In consequence, these states have generated the highest average annual rates of growth in the country since 1994. The classification of states follows the trade exposure variable. Ten states (Baja California Sur, Campeche, Chiapas, Colima, Guerrero, Nayarit, Oaxaca, Quintana Roo, Tabasco and Zacatecas) at the bottom of the scale have mean exposure of 2.5% of their economies, (with a standard deviation of 2.0). Ten states (Baja California, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Distrito Federal, State of Mexico, Nuevo León, Puebla, Querétario, Sonora and Tamaulipas) at the top of the scale have with a mean of 64.6% (with a s.d. of 39.4). The mixed group of the remaining states have mean exposure of 16.4% (s.d., 4.2).

Figure 6

Configuration of States and Madrazo Support in 2002



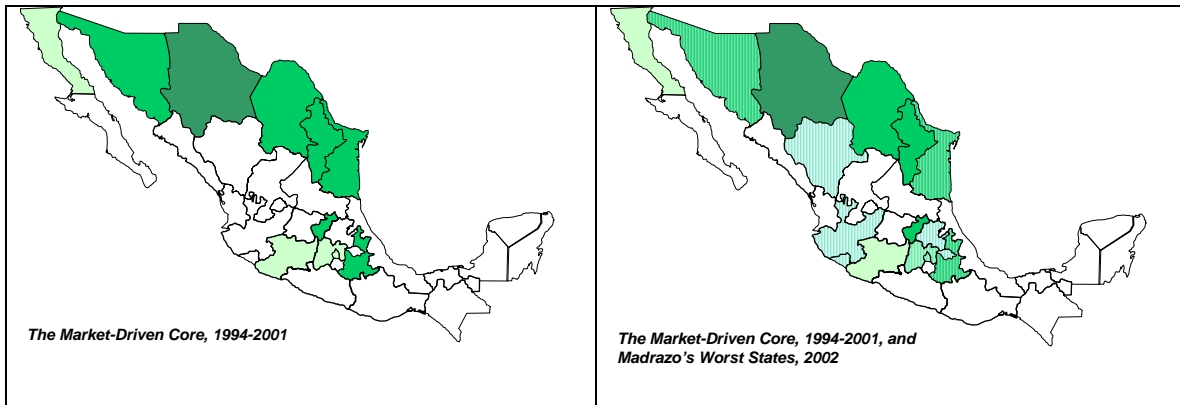


Figure 6 shows the categorization of states according to their development strategy. The maps on the left show the state-driven and the market-driven core states. The maps on the right show the relationship between the states which we have categorized as the state-driven core, and the performance of Madrazo in the 2002 internal leadership election of the PRI. There is a very strong overlap, although Madrazo performed very well in Aguascalientes, Nuevo Leon and Baja California, which are clearly not state-driven in their development process. On the other hand, the figure also shows the market-driven core of states and the relationship between them and Madrazo's poor performance. It turns out that again there is a very large overlap, although the market-driven states where Madrazo performed poorly are mostly concentrated in the center of the country.

## 6. Conclusions

The 2006 presidential election pitted a leftist candidate stressing poverty and social justice, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador of the PRD, with Felipe Calderon Hinojosa of the PAN, emphasizing conservative and market oriented programmatic views. The PRI candidate trailed behind in third place, in this highly polarized electoral contest. The

polarization in the electoral race was a reflection of the reality of Mexican development in the post-NAFTA era. Two Mexicos have clearly emerged: a cosmopolitan, vibrant modern nation with high prospects for economic growth and improved well-being, and a stagnating country of impoverished peasants and marginal urban dwellers who seem to have been left behind by the transformations of the 1990s. The two Mexicos are clustered in territorially distinct areas of the country, although this is not simply a North-South divide.

The social cleavage of Mexican society is reflected in the divisions within the PRI. For decades that party constituted a multi-class and multi-sector coalition that had been able to keep together a rather heterogeneous group of interests. The authoritarian aspect of hegemonic rule was reflected in the exclusion of dissident groups and citizens and the abuse by PRI politicians of their privileges while in office. But there is no question that the party remained in office for reasons beyond the threat of violence or the exercise of electoral fraud. Vast sectors of Mexican society voted for the party, and these bases of support are reflected in the survival of the party in the democratic era inaugurated in 2000.

The survival of the PRI was predicated on its ability to win democratic elections. In around half of the states the party has successfully become entrenched in office. The governors thus became the key players in the reconstruction of the national party, and will continue to play the most prominent roles in the foreseeable future. If the PRI is to survive as a national political party it will have to reconcile the dual character of its members, which reflects the dualism of Mexico's development. On the one hand, governors from the state-driven core will expect that the party will push for regional

compensatory policies benefiting the poorest states with federal transfers, to be used at the discretion of governors. Governors from the market-driven core states will push for greater fiscal devolution and the freedom for state governments to retain a larger part of their tax revenue in their own sphere.

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