

**Changing Ideological Dimensions of Party Competition in Mexico, 1990-2006\***

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## Abstract

The increase of electoral competition in Mexico during the last 15 years goes hand in hand with significant changes in the Mexican electorate. One of them is a remarkable redistribution of the left-right self-placement scale commonly measured in survey research. Related to that, there is a change in the underlying meaning of left and right, from a regime cleavage that dominated the early stages of party competition in the 1990s, to a left-right divide that increasingly relies on economic issues. In this chapter, I analyze how these changes influenced the formation of political coalitions in the 2000 and 2006 presidential elections. A PAN presidential candidate won both races, but the winning coalitions were significantly different. PAN's Vicente Fox defeated the ruling party, PRI, with a broad coalition that relied heavily on left, center, and center-right voters, whereas PAN's Felipe Calderón defeated the leftist candidate López Obrador with a center-right coalition, drawing much fewer votes from the left than Fox. The analysis is based on four Mexican samples of the *World Values Surveys* conducted from 1990 to 2005, and two national exit polls conducted during the presidential elections of 2000 and 2006. A central finding in this paper is that strong citizen support for democracy, a central component of the regime cleavage, has lost significance in explaining left and right voter positions in recent years. The association of ideological orientations with party support reflects the changing meanings of left and right in politics, a phenomenon observed in other new democracies as well.

Survey research shows that the political identities of Mexicans have changed significantly during the last 15 years, as Mexico's dominant party system was transformed into a competitive multi-party system. Along with remarkable changes in partisanship, there has been a redistribution of left-right ideological identities among the electorate. Evidence from the *World Values Surveys* conducted in Mexico from 1990 to 2005 reveals that an increasing number of respondents place themselves on a left-right scale, a diminishing proportion do so on the center, and an increasing proportion on the poles, but mainly on the right. This change could be interpreted, at first, as a growing polarization in a period of increasing political competition.

Along with this ideological redistribution, a redefinition of the left-right terms has also taken place, leading to an "ideological realignment" of party electorates. Because left and right self-identifications tend to reflect the relevant dimensions of political conflict in a specific context and time, this redefinition is a clear sign of how the dynamics of party competition in Mexico is changing from a regime cleavage based on views toward democracy and the former ruling party, to opposing views on economic orientations and social issues. There is evidence that left-right orientations were significantly related to political preferences and opinions in the 1988 and 1991 Mexican national elections (Domínguez and McCann 1995), as well as in 1997 and 2000 (Moreno 2003). Since the 1980s, and at least until the 2000 election, surveys of Mexican adults and voters showed a strong association of leftist ideological positions with preferences for political change and democratization. In contrast, rightist positions represented more favorable views towards the ruling party and the status quo. Left and right positions of voters portrayed a regime cleavage, with pro-democratic views on the left and authoritarian views on the right (Moreno 1999). However, after the 2000 election, when the PRI lost the presidency for the first time in seven decades, the regime cleavage started to fade, allowing for a redefinition of left and right positions around other, social and economic issues.

Apparently, changing political identities in Mexico reflect a more generalized pattern of change in new democracies. Despite the long predominance of the Communist Party in the former Soviet Union, recent evidence not only shows that party identification has developed strongly in both Ukraine and Russia (Miller and Klobucar 2000), but that left and right positions have also changed during their recent phases of democratic development. For example, views toward democracy were strong predictors of left-right views in the early stages of party competition in post-Soviet Ukraine, and they later reflected more economic orientations (Klobucar, Miller, and Erb 2002); changing meanings of left and right have also been observed in the Russian electorate. As posited by some researchers, "evidence suggests that there has indeed been a dramatic change in the character of left and right in Russia. [...] evidence relating to the ideological associations of left-right self-placement, which indicates that its meaning has to a large degree evolved as the political and economic transition has progressed" (Evans and Whitefield 1998: 1026). While research on changing political identities has focused on several post-Communist democracies, scholarly work that analyzes this phenomenon in Latin American new democracies is rather scarce. This chapter is an attempt to fill that gap.

I analyze the transformation of left-right ideological identities of the Mexican electorate, the elements that define such identities at different points in time, and the evolving relationship between left-right positions and party preferences. The data used here provide an understanding of recent presidential elections in Mexico, but an additional aim is to discuss the general theoretical implications of changing political identities in new democracies. I interpret the outcomes of the 2000 and 2006 presidential elections based on the types of electoral coalitions formed. Two different PAN presidential candidates won these elections, but their winning coalitions were significantly different from each other. In 2000, Vicente Fox defeated the ruling party, PRI, carrying a significant proportion of the left vote — Fox actually outnumbered the “leftist” candidate, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, in that segment of the electorate (Moreno 2006a). The electoral base of the PAN-led Alliance for Change in 2000 was so ideologically and geographically broad that it was portrayed as a catch-all party (Magaloni and Moreno 2003). Voting for a change in 2000 favored the PAN candidate.

In contrast, the highly contested election of 2006 has a very different story. The PAN candidate, Felipe Calderón, heavily depended on center-right and right-wing voters, and his performance among the leftist electorate, if compared to Fox’s six years earlier, was rather poor. The PRD candidate, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, carried most of the leftist vote this time. However, Calderón won comfortably on the right, an electorate that Fox had lost to the PRI. Voting for stability in 2006 now favored the PAN candidate.

If relevant dimensions of political competition are represented by a left-right continuum, the link between ideological placements and vote choices should tell us much about the nature of political coalitions and, therefore, about elections. Because the PRI was defeated after seven decades of continuous government, many analysts view the 2000 election as the first of a new democratic era. In my view, it was more likely the last of a series of increasingly competitive national elections driven by a regime cleavage. In the early stages of Mexico’s political transformation, it was not just government versus opposition; it was the PRI versus the opposition. All that had changed by 2006, when the presidency was in PAN’s hands. The PRI suffered a dramatic drop in electoral support, and ranked a distant third in the national vote count for president, the PRD did superbly well among an economically-redistributive and socially-liberal leftist electorate, and the PAN relied heavily on market-oriented and conservative right-wing voters (Moreno 2006b). This was, again, government versus opposition; but it was, for the first time in the post ruling-party era, the left against the right.

Why did this “ideological realignment” happen in only six years, from one election to the next, but not during the early stages of increasing political competition, say, from the mid-1980s until 2000? My explanation specifically lies in how the left-right divide changed its meaning after alternation in 2000, and how this affected electoral coalitions. In 2000, with the PRI still controlling the presidency, choosing the PAN was an almost indistinguishable behavior among center-right and left-wing voters. In 2006, with a *panista* president, the PAN was mostly a right-wing choice. This means that left and right reflected, once again, a government versus opposition dichotomy, but certainly

not a regime cleavage. As I will show below, strong support for democracy no longer explained left-right positions in 2006 as it once did.

Data used for this paper derive from surveys of Mexican adults and voters. First, I use the Mexican samples of the *World Values Survey* (WVS) conducted from 1990 to 2005, and develop a value-based model of ideological placements.<sup>1</sup> I find that strong support for democracy, a central component of the regime cleavage, gradually lost significance in explaining left and right positions. In contrast, some economic orientations that were irrelevant in 2000 gained importance six years later. Secondly, I employ data from national exit polls conducted during the 2000 and 2006 presidential elections, and develop a model of vote choice for president to assess the role of left and right positions and other conventional variables of voting behavior in each election.<sup>2</sup> I find the left-right dichotomy to be a powerful predictor of vote choice, despite the changing meanings from one election to the next.

### **Left-Right Competition: Evolving Meanings and Changing Actors**

The principle and reality that political elites in democracies gain power by means of gaining votes has driven scholars, from Schumpeter and Downs until today, to explain the dynamics of competitive politics. Put simply, “competition obliges elites to take into account the preferences of voters” (Bartolini 2002:87). In order to understand party-voter linkages, many political scientists have relied on the notion of ‘dimensions of competition’. Such dimensions may reflect social and structural divides, antagonistic value orientations, or opposed belief systems about society, economics, and politics.

Left and right political identifications usually tap opposing views on these dimensions, both in established and new democracies. In the early 1980s, there were at least seven “dimensions of ideology” in West European party systems that explained differences between the relevant political parties (Lijphart 1981). Almost two decades later, different “dimensions of programmatic competition” characterized post-Communist party systems from East and Central Europe (Kitschelt *et al.* 1999). Some Latin American countries that experienced increasing political competition during the last two decades provided evidence that views towards democracy shaped one of the main dimension of party competition in the 1990s (Moreno 1999). As it was argued, a dominant democratic-authoritarian cleavage made the classic socio-economic conflict a secondary concern. In most cases, one side of the conflict was well represented by the left, and the other by the right, and Mexico was no exception. “The opposing views towards democracy are strongly related to party preferences... [and] the left-right dimension reflects well these opposing views, with the ‘left’ characterized by the most

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<sup>1</sup> Information about the *World Values Survey* can be found at [www.worldvaluessurvey.org](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org) and data for the first four waves (1981-2002) can be accessed through the ICPSR at the University of Michigan. The 2005-2006 survey is still in fieldwork for several countries.

<sup>2</sup> These national exit polls were sponsored and conducted by newspaper *Reforma* and are part of its survey archives. The 2000 exit poll can be accessed at ITAM’s Department of Political Science website ([www.itam.mx](http://www.itam.mx)).

pro-democracy attitudes,... and the ‘right’ by more authoritarian positions” (Moreno 1998).

But the democratic-authoritarian dimension of political competition was only temporary; its centrality to party competition was bounded by the permanence of the ruling party in power (Moreno 1999). Political alternation in 2000 and a reduced support for the PRI in 2006 have seriously diminished the influence of the democratic-authoritarian divide that dominated party competition in the 1990s. The two main political coalitions, which once obtained votes from the pro-democratic left almost as a matter of course, represented opposite left and right options more sharply than before. A comparable example that illustrates this kind of change well would be the 2005 presidential election in Poland; the main presidential contenders, who once fought together on the democratic side against the Communist regime, were now sharply divided on left and right economic and social views. Even if Mexico’s PRI has a chance to regain power in another national election, the underlying meaning of political competition is unlikely to reflect the once important regime divide.

Described like this, the 2006 presidential race in Mexico could be seen as a first post-transition, left-right confrontation; except that “transition” is not an easy term for Mexico’s gradual political transformation. Unlike third wave democracies where there is a clear turning point in their process of political change (1974 in Spain and Portugal, 1988 in Chile, 1989 in East and Central Europe, 1991 in post-Soviet societies), there is no consensus about Mexico’s political time-line transforming from a one-party regime into a multiparty system. A previously disenfranchised left may think of the student repression of 1968 as a milestone. A generation of PRI reformers may speak of the inclusion of new political parties in 1976. Most *Cardenistas* choose 1988 as the turning point of democracy. PRI technobureaucrats of the 1990s would probably emphasize the electoral reform of 1996 and the subsequent mid-term election of 1997, when the PRI lost its majority in the lower house of Congress. Most *panistas* could mention a wide variety of historical struggles and events, but would agree on the symbolism of local elections like the ones of 1985 or 1989 when they first won a state governor race. *Foxistas*, needless to say, would mark July 2, 2000, as the day democracy came about.

The fact is that, regardless of what historical turning point one chooses, the last fifteen years have been characterized by an increasing political competition. Table 1 shows the vote share for major parties in national congressional elections to illustrate this.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

### **The Re-Distribution of Left-Right Positions**

As electoral competition increased, changes in the electorate’s distribution of left-right positions have taken place, as evidenced by the Mexican samples of the *World Values Survey* (WVS) from 1990 to 2005. Such redistribution can be described as a gradual, but

significant, reduction of the center, a growing right, and modest variations on the left, with an increase in the last measurement.

The data in Figure 1 show this trend.<sup>3</sup> In 1990, almost half of respondents (48%) placed themselves on the center category, a proportion that decreased to 41% in 1997, to 34% in 2000, and to 31% in the 2005 survey. The center has decreased from being almost half of the electorate, to about one third of it. An immediate interpretation of this “fading center” is that the Mexican electorate has become increasingly polarized, and that has happened as the party system has become more competitive. But the fact is that, despite a higher percent on the left in the last survey, the main redistribution represents a shift to the right, where there was a positive 12-point net shift between the first and last surveys—the left only had a positive 3-point net shift.

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

The 17-point decrease in the ‘center’ category is remarkable. But, is this trend also captured by other survey instruments? It is difficult to validate survey trends with other parallel survey instruments in Mexico for several reasons. The first is that long trends from public opinion surveys are scarce, although long trends of survey items can be constructed using comparable measures employed by several polling organizations at different points in time. In this sense, data gathered by different survey organizations may complement rather than validate each other. A second reason is that, even if certain items—such as the left-right scale—are included in survey instruments conducted by different organizations, they are often asked using different scales or question wording, which creates problems of comparability. The third and fourth reasons are different sampling coverage and techniques, and different interviewing techniques. In particular, interviewing techniques matter substantially: a common 10-point left-right scale used by two different polling organizations, one using cards to aid respondents to place themselves on the scale and the other asking the question directly without cards, may result in significant differences of measurement.

Perhaps the best available survey instrument to compare the WVS results for Mexico is the *Latinobarómetro*, a survey conducted in 18 countries from Latin America almost every year since 1995.<sup>4</sup> The Mexican samples of *Latinobarómetro* from 1995 to 2004 actually show a much more volatile distribution of left and right placements than the WVS does. A collapsed 3-point version of the original 11-point left-right scale (remember the WVS uses a 10-point scale), shows that, in the ten-year period, the net shift on the left between first and last surveys is plus 7 points (from 27% in 1995, to 34% in 2004). The net shifts during the same period on the center and right are minus 3 points (49 to 46%, respectively), and minus 4 points (24 vs. 20%), respectively.

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<sup>3</sup> Figure 1 displays a collapsed 3-category version of the WVS 10-point scale (1-4 representing ‘left’, 5-6 ‘center’, and 7-10 ‘right’. No placements and “don’t know” responses are not shown but represent an average 21 percent for the entire period, and 17 percent in the last survey.

<sup>4</sup> Details about *Latinobarómetro* surveys are available at: [www.latinobarometro.org](http://www.latinobarometro.org).

This general trend, considering only the first and last surveys, does not confirm the shift in the left-right distribution in Mexico, as measured by the WVS. Moreover, the *Latinobarómetro* series shows very abrupt changes in this distribution within the period. For example, variations on the left category range from a low 16% in 2001 to a high 39% in 1996, whereas variation on the center category range from a low 35% in 1996 to a high 57% in 2002. Variations on the right range from a low 20% in 2002 and 2004 to a high 38% in 2001. The net difference within the period for each category is 23 points on the left, 22 points on the center, and 18 points on the right. These swings are much more noticeable and seem more ‘random’ than those observed in the WVS, which shows a gradual decrease of the center and an increase on the right.

Twenty national quarterly polls conducted by Mexican newspaper *Reforma* from 2000 to 2005 (and with sample sizes similar to these comparative studies — n=approx. 1,500), show a more stable pattern of left-right distribution than does *Latinobarómetro*, and, also using a 10-point scale with an aid card, the distribution is very similar to the one measured by the WVS: an average for 2000 and 2005 shows the left with 18 and 17% respectively, the center with 26 and 28%, and the right with 56 and 55%.

The WVS data collection represents a longer period for the measurement of left-right self-placement than any other available series of surveys in Mexico, and they show what seems to be a politically relevant shift in the left-right distribution rather than apparently random changes. The WVS Mexican surveys also include measurements of other relevant variables over time facilitating comparable multivariate analyses for each year, especially for the last three surveys (or the 1997-2000-2005 period).

### **The Re-Definition of Left-Right Positions**

In this section, I develop a value-based, multivariate model of left-right positions in Mexico based on WVS data for three points in time: 1997, 2000, and 2006. The model is designed to show what elements most define left and right positions among the Mexican electorate, and how the statistical significance of those elements has changed over time. In the next section, I develop a multivariate model of presidential vote choice to assess the role of left-right placements in the 2000 and 2006 elections.

I chose multinomial logit analysis because I consider the comparison of specific left, center, and right categories with each other relevant for our understanding of their changing meanings.<sup>5</sup> In fact, the main interest is in the contrasting explanations of left and right positions, not on the degree of those positions. The most theoretically relevant implications for values and policy orientations reside in the left-right comparison. For this reason, I leave out of the table results that compare the center category. The left category serves as basis of comparison in the model.

The model is displayed in Table 2. Before looking at the results, a brief description and justification of the independent variables is due. A first methodological

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<sup>5</sup> The 10-point left-right scale was collapsed into a 3-category left-center-right variable for this analysis.

aspect is that all these variables are available in the 1997, 2000, and 2005 surveys. In order of appearance in the table, there are two variables that tap economic orientations (income equality vs. individual incentives, and state vs. individual economic responsibility); two variables that reflect attitudes towards authority and democracy; two variables that reflect traditional orientations of particular importance to Mexico (nationalism and religiosity); two measures of attitudes towards social issues such as abortion and homosexuality; and, finally, a 4-item index of materialist-post-materialist values. (See the Appendix for question wording and coding)

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Variables that measure economic orientations represent a classic, economic left-right conflict, with preferences for state and economic equality expected to be associated with the left, and preferences for market and economic individualism with the right. The political variables referring to authority and democracy are components of the regime cleavage — or democratic-authoritarian dimension — described earlier in this chapter. One expectation is that authoritarian views relate to the right, while support for democracy relates to the left. Another expectation is that these variables become less significant in explaining left-right positions as democracy develops further in Mexico. The logic is that a regime divide is not relevant when political conflict no longer focuses on regime change. This is the case when conflict over the type of regime is no longer the overriding issue, but evidence from East and Central European countries also suggests that new generations of voters in the democratic phase of development are not as focused on regime issues (Kitschelt et. al. 1999).

With regard to nationalism and religion, my expectation is straightforward: that Mexicans driven by strong feelings of national pride, or who give religion a high level of importance in their lives, should be more likely to consider themselves on the right, while less nationalist and more secular Mexicans should be more likely to be on the left. Another set of values, based on views towards abortion and homosexuality, reflect a typical liberal-conservative divide based on social issues, and the relationship is also straightforward: liberals (individuals more likely to justify or accept abortion and homosexuality) are expected to be on the left, while conservatives (those more likely to reject abortion and homosexuality) are expected to be on the right.

Finally, based on Ronald Inglehart's theory of value change in society, I have included a measure of materialist and post-materialist (M/PM) values, the former representing individuals driven by physical and physiological priorities, and the latter by concerns on the quality of life and self-expression (Inglehart 1997). Several years ago, Lijphart (1981) identified the M/PM value dimension as one of the most defining aspects of ideology and party competition in societies like Sweden and the Netherlands, and perhaps more recent research would find them important in a growing number of post-industrial societies; however, few would imagine that they had any political relevance in less developed countries like Mexico or any other from Latin America.

As evidence of the M/PM divide became clearer in Mexican society in recent years (Moreno 2005), I decided to test it along with other variables — including socio-demographic ones — in early stages of my analysis. Surprisingly, whereas most socio-demographic variables proved statistically insignificant, the M/MP variable grows important in time: after being completely irrelevant in 1997, it almost attained statistical significance in 2000, and actually was one of three variables that had statistical significance in 2005, opening the door for more analysis and further interpretation of this finding. The expectation for the M/PM value variable, based on other countries analyzed by Inglehart, is that materialists are on the right, while post-materialists are on the left, although they actually defined New Right and New Left positions in post-industrial society, the new right representing the most insecure segments of society and favoring xenophobic parties, and the new left representing affluent segments of society that support environmentalist parties and new issues.

According to data shown in Table 2, the two variables that represent economic views are almost consistently significant and relate to left and right in the expected direction: left positions are significantly more likely among individuals who have preferences for state responsibility and income equality, while right positions are more likely among those who prefer economic individualism and the market. The state-individual responsibility variable attained statistical significance in only one of the three years (2000), but the other variable — a good representation of the socialist-capitalist classic divide — was significant in all three surveys. This shows a consistent association of views on social equality and economic individualism with left-right self-identifications.

Views on authority and strong support for democracy were important in the first two surveys — conducted before alternation took place at the presidential level in Mexico — and in the expected ways, with pro-authority views on the right, and pro-democratic attitudes on the left, but then their significance faded in the last survey — as expected under the regime-cleavage argument described before. This particular finding is far from being hard evidence that the regime cleavage (or democratic-authoritarian dimension of competition) was gone only five years after alternation in 2000, but it certainly is good evidence that this may, in fact, be the case. Strong support for democracy used to differentiate left from right ideological identifications. As support for democracy has grown (the proportion of Mexicans who thought that having a democratic political system is very good or fairly good increased from 70% to 81% between 1997 and 2005), the ideological differentiation of democratic views has also disappeared. Democracy is as valued by both the right and the left. I will return to this point below, with a discussion of how many PAN partisans, once on the left and with pro-democratic views, have realigned on the right.

Nationalism and religion are weak predictors of left and right, although religion was statistically significant in the first survey shown. However, an unexpected finding in this analysis is that liberal-conservative social issues did not predict left and right positions in any year, despite the fact that their influence on defining the Mexican party

political space in a multidimensional fashion has proven important (Moreno 2003, 2006b). This obviously requires more discussion.

Finally, the M/MP values measure gained statistical significance in the last survey, explaining left and right positions in the expected ways: a post-materialist left against a materialist right. This finding also requires more analysis of the role of value and intergenerational value change in Mexico in particular, and Latin America in general.

### **Changing Partisan Positions on the Left-Right Scale**

From 2000 to 2006, the Mexican electorate not only experienced changes in both the distribution and underlying meanings of left-right positions, but also on the average partisan placements on the left-right continuum, thereby redefining Mexico's party political space. These changes are characterized by modest movements of the PRD and PRI electorates' mean placement left-wise, by a modest movement of the independent electorate right-wise, and by a significant movement of the PAN electorate to the right. This is shown in Figure 2, where the average positions of party identifiers are shown on a 5-point left-right scale, as measured in the 2000 and 2006 national exit polls.

[FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE]

In the 2000 election, mean partisan placements reflected what most surveys had shown since the 1980s and well into the 1990s: PRD and PAN electorates were placed to the left of the PRI. This ordering of parties in the left-right scale reflects the democratic-authoritarian dimension described earlier. As shown, the average placements of PRD and PAN voters were relatively close (2.6. and 3.0 in a 5-point scale, respectively), and the latter actually shared the same mean placement with independent voters (3.0). PRI voters were more ideologically differentiated from that "cluster", with an average position of 4.0 in the scale, which, based on its average voter placement, made it the party on the right.

By 2006, average partisan placements changed, and, in the PAN case, this change was very significant. From an average position of 3.0 in 2000, PAN voters moved to an average 4.0 on the scale in 2006. This movement to the right reflects the party's government condition, on one the hand, and changing meanings of left and right, on the other. As I will show in the next section, the composition of vote choice also changed, and, as other research shows, the composition of party identification experienced some social realignment as well (Moreno and Mendez forthcoming).

In contrast to PAN's movement to the right, both PRD and PRI voters moved, on average, to the left. Variation among PRI voters was actually larger than the one observed for PRD voters. As shown in other studies, several former PRI identifiers changed their loyalties to PAN on the right, and some of them to PRD on the left (Moreno and Mendez 2007).

In sum, the party political spaces delineated in Figure 2 for 2000 and 2006 show significant changing dynamics of the Mexican electorate. To what extent this can be considered an “ideological realignment” will require more analysis, but it seems that this redefinition of the Mexican party political space reflects political alternation and the changing underlying meanings of left-right terms used by voters. Unlike in 2000, when leftist voters were still more pro-democratic than rightist voters, in 2006, left- and right electorates shared favorable views towards democracy and their main differentiation had a socio-economic character.

### **The Impact of Left-Right Self-Placement on the Presidential Vote: 2000-2006.**

In this section, I analyze the role of left-right self-placement on presidential voting choice in 2000 and 2006. For this purpose, I develop a multinomial logit model of vote choice, where the main variables are left and right ideological positions, controlling for socio-demographic factors and other relevant variables included in the national exit polls that have theoretical relevance in the voting literature. The model is shown in Table 3, and a brief description of the variables is due before discussing the results.

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

The dependent variable in this model is voting choice for president, with the PAN candidate as a basis of comparison. A PAN candidate won in each election, but the main opponent differed: a rightist PRI in 2000, and a leftist PRD in 2006. Support for other minor candidates is not considered in the model, as it represents no more than 5% of the total vote in each election.

In order of appearance in the table, independent variables include left and right self-identifications (center and no-placement as basis of comparison), party identification representing all three major parties (other parties and independents as a basis of comparison), presidential approval, personal and national economic evaluations, region, urban-rural population, sex, age, education, and religiosity (represented by a measure of church attendance). Income was dropped from the analysis as it did not attain any statistical significance and contributed to a larger percent of missing data. All these variables result in a series of findings that require more interpretation and elaboration than this chapter allows, so I will mention some of them and focus mainly on the effects of ideological placements on the vote in both elections.

The most relevant finding is that ideology matters even when controlling for party identification. In 2000, identification with the left proved to have a moderate, but statistically significant, effect on vote choice; it increased the probability of voting for the PRD candidate, as compared to PAN, and decreased the probability of voting for the PRI candidate. As the PAN coalition that supported Vicente Fox was so ideologically heterogeneous, the effects of ideology in 2000 were rather moderate.

However, the impact of ideological placement in 2006 is much stronger, particularly when considering the two main contenders: López Obrador on the left, and Felipe Calderón on the right. The relationship of leftist voters supporting the PRD candidate and rightist voters preferring the PAN candidate proves to be statistically significant. Left and right positions do not explain, however, the PAN-PRI dichotomy in the 2006 election. As previously shown in Figure 2, PRI and PAN were less ideologically differentiated in 2006, according to their voters' mean placement on the ideological scale.

As quantitative scholarly work on Mexico has shown since the early 1990s — based on multivariate models of individual political behavior — partisanship is a very strong predictor of voting choice. The data in Table 3 confirms that the impact of partisanship remains strong and in the expected directions. Partisan voting explains much of what happened in 2000 and 2006. However, evidence of significant cross-over voting is also suggested by the coefficients. Some PRI voters significantly supported PAN's Fox over PRD's Cárdenas. However, the model does not support the claim that some PRD partisans voted strategically for Fox in 2000.

In 2006, cross-over voting also showed statistical significance for PRI and PRD partisans (it is not possible to assess the extent of PAN cross-over voting with this model, where PAN serves as basis of comparison, but, for a deeper analysis of this, see Moreno and Mendez 2007). Interestingly, the coefficients in Table 3 show that some PRI voters significantly preferred PAN's Calderón over PRD's López Obrador. In contrast, PRD voters preferred a PRI candidate over PAN's. This is another sign of how ideology played a greater role in 2006.

Economic evaluations also gained explanatory power in 2006. With PRI's Ernesto Zedillo as chief executive, presidential approval proved significant and favorable to the PRI in 2000, when comparing support for the PRI presidential candidate, Francisco Labastida, and for his main contender, Vicente Fox. Perceptions of personal economic improvement moderately contributed to the PRI vote in 2000, but perceptions about the national economy did not have significant effects on the vote. Favorable evaluations of the country's economic situation were rather insignificant. In 2006, presidential approval again played in favor of an incumbent party candidate, in this case Felipe Calderón, and economic evaluations, both personal and national, were much more significant. Favorable assessments of both the national economy and the respondent's financial situation, increased the probability of voting for PAN's Calderón, and reduced the probability of doing so for the other two main candidates.

Because the 2006 contest has raised questions about a deep regional divide in Mexican electoral politics, the model in Table 3 includes a regional variable that represents northern and western states (where the PAN performed generally better), and central and southern states, where PRD's López Obrador won more states. This regional variable actually explains the PAN versus PRD vote in the presidential race, and does not explain any of the PAN versus PRI vote. Indeed, this evidence confirms that the blue (PAN) versus yellow divide (PRD) was not only real but significant in 2006, at least in the presidential race, while, six years earlier, evidence of this regional divide was not as

strong — the North and *Bajío* regions actually played in favor of the PAN candidate then, but Fox also won a more significant number of states in the center and south of the country, states that were won by the former Mexico City mayor, López Obrador, in 2006. Representing almost a tenth of the national electorate, Mexico City is one of the swing states that went from blue to yellow.

The data shown in Table 3 also show that PAN not only performed better in the north and west in both elections, but also among the urban population. The rural vote was more likely to favor either PRD or PRI against PAN in 2000. However, this is only true when comparing PRI and PAN in 2006. This shows that the PRD did significantly better in the cities in 2006, to the extent that the urban rural “divide” did not discriminate among the two main contenders in 2006. The reduced PRI vote actually was heavily dependent on the rural vote this last election.

The PRI’s “female” advantage in previous elections disappeared in 2006. Still significant in 2000 in favor of PRI, women’s voting was not so different from that of men in the 2006 presidential race. Age, however, was not significant in 2000, but showed a moderate effect on the PRI versus PAN vote six years later. Older voters were significantly more likely to vote for the PRI candidate. As shown earlier, the PRI vote in 2006 was more dependent on rural areas, and this latter evidence shows the dependence on older Mexicans as well.

In 2000, education had a favorable effect on the PAN vote. Fox drew significant support from better-educated voters, and this was statistically significant when comparing PAN with PRD and PRI separately. This was true in 2006 when comparing the PAN and PRI votes, but the PAN-PRD contest was not influenced by education. This means that the PRD coalition had a stronger component of urban, better-educated voters in 2006, which is consistent with their more liberal views on social issues (Moreno 2006b). This is a sign that some Fox voters from 2000 actually voted for López Obrador in 2006, switching parties, but probably maintaining their ideologically leftist orientation. And this may not have been a minor swing. According to the 2006 exit poll used in this analysis, 30% of voters who said they voted for Fox in 2000 said that they voted for López Obrador in 2006. This actually represented about 35% of López Obrador’s total vote. If we only consider the leftist voters that said they supported Fox in 2000, 62% of them voted for López Obrador in 2006 (13% of his total vote share).

Finally, religiosity had a moderate effect in 2000, with regular church attendants more likely to vote for the PAN candidate over either the PRD’s or the PRI’s. However, despite the sharper ideological differences in the 2006 race, religiosity was not a significant factor behind the vote.

As this analysis shows, the voters’ left and right positions are significant explanations of voting choice in 2000 and 2006, but in different ways. Leftist views used to represent an anti-PRI sentiment, regardless of the ideological differentiation of PAN and PRD. However, in 2006, left and right were more important in differentiating PRD from PAN voters, to the extent that a PAN candidate won both elections with an

ideologically significant margin of victory. Figure 3 shows this graphically. Based on probabilities of voting for each candidate derived from the multinomial logit model displayed on Table 3, this figure shows that, in 2000, PAN's Fox had the largest margin of victory among leftist voters, and a significant losing margin among rightist voters. In contrast, PAN's Calderón had his best performance among the rightist voters, and his worst defeat among leftist voters. Additionally, the margin of victory of both candidates in the center diminished from one election to the next, which shows a more contested field. In sum, choosing a PAN candidate in 2000 and 2006 was a somewhat different phenomenon, and reveals the changing nature of Mexico's electoral coalitions. A major interpretation of this is that the meaning of left and right changed from a regime cleavage based on the PRI-rule that had lasted at least a decade and a half, to a left-right confrontation that is shaping Mexico's new electoral arena.

[FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE]

## **Discussion**

Studying voting behavior in new democracies is a task of observing change where continuity would otherwise be expected. In those settings, individual political behavior and collective outcomes seem both a cause and a consequence of changing political conditions: new rules and practices, new institutions and parties, new voters and electoral coalitions, new ways and sources of political finance, new patterns of media coverage, and, in sum, new forms of conducting mass politics in contexts of increasing political competition. Emerging democracies reveal how politics changes when political power is redistributed, how new political coalitions form when new leadership arises or when parties gain or lose power for the first time, and, ultimately, how individual political identities evolve in order to make sense — and eventually set the bases for continuity — of the new political world.

Political change in Mexico during the last decade and a half is a story of how, as democracy evolved, the issue of democracy in party competition faded. Mexican political party competition can be understood using the analytical tools of a left-right terminology, but left and right labels have also evolved in their meaning and in their distribution among the mass electorate. This has important implications for party support and for political dynamics in general. Whereas, in 2000, a coalition based on pro-change views defeated the ruling party in its attempt to maintain the presidency, in 2006, an economically redistributive left challenged a now incumbent PAN relying on a center-right coalition.

Besides the changing meanings and effects of ideology on the vote, multivariate analysis of Mexicans' vote choices in 2000 and 2006 show patterns of continuity and change in other factors as well. The distribution of partisanship has changed significantly (as shown by Moreno and Mendez forthcoming), but the effect of party identification on the vote remains strong. Economic evaluations did not matter much in 2000, but they actually became central in explaining the voters' choice for president in 2006. This

undoubtedly requires more attention (although it certainly signals the redefinition of political conflict from a regime cleavage to a left-right economic cleavage), as do the effects of different regional and structural variables, including a good assessment of class. Income did not prove significant in either election (and, therefore, was not shown in the analysis), and education only gained statistical significance in 2006 when comparing PAN against PRI, but it did not discriminate between the main contenders. Despite journalistic claims and political rhetoric that a strong class element was present in the 2006 election — the left’s motto was “the poor first” — analysis of exit poll data does not support that claim.

In this chapter, I have documented significant changes in the ways Mexicans define themselves on a left-right continuum, and how attitudes towards different issues change the meaning of left and right. As a new democracy, Mexico offers a great opportunity to understand changes in mass politics as societies democratize. A pending task is to extend the scope of this research to other Latin American societies where political transformation has taken place in the last two decades. As East and Central European new democracies have provided evidence of changing political identities and their effect on party competition, this study on Mexico is a step towards assessing those changes in Latin America, where the role of ideology in newly democratic party competition deserves a great deal of attention.

\*Earlier versions of this chapter were presented as papers at the meeting of the World Values Survey Association (WVSA), Istanbul, Nov. 3-4, 2006, the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association (APSA), Philadelphia, Aug. 31-Sept. 3, 2006.



10	4	9	7	14	8	9	12	8	17
% 2000:									
31	3	3	3	10	5	6	7	4	20
% 2005:									
20	4	3	2	10	7	7	12	9	22

Percentages do not add to 100% because “don’t know” responses are not shown.

*State vs. individual responsibility:*

Question: “Now please indicate your views on various issues. How would you place your views on this scale? 1 means you agree completely with the statement on the left; 10 means you agree completely with statement on the right; and if your views fall somewhere in between, you can choose any number in between.”

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
The government should take more responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for							People should take more responsibility to provide for themselves		

Coding: The scale was left as such (1 to 10) and “don’t know” responses (which varied from 3% to 8% depending on the year) were set as missing.

Distribution:

% 1997:	18	5	9	10	17	6	8	7	5	10
% 2000:	29	3	3	4	11	5	5	7	4	19
% 2005:	26	5	3	4	12	7	5	8	8	18

*Respect for authority*

Question (78): “Here is a list of various changes in our way of life that might take place in the near future. Please indicate for each one, if it were to happen, whether you think it would be a good thing, a bad thing, or don’t you mind?”

“Greater respect for authority”.

Coding: 1= “A bad thing; 2= “Don’t mind” and “Don’t know”; 3= “A good thing”.

Distribution:

	1997	2000	2005
% A bad thing	7	6	3
% Don’t mind &	29	26	13

don't know  
 % A good thing                      64                      68                      85

*Strong support for democracy*

Question (151): “I am going to describe various types of political systems and ask you what you think about each as a way of governing this country. For each one, would you say it is a very good, fairly good, fairly bad or very bad way of governing this country?”  
 “Having a democratic political system”.

Coding: 1= “very good”; 0= all other responses.

Distribution: percent saying “very good” each year: 26% in 1997, 25% in 2000, and 26% in 2005.

*National pride*

Question (209): “How proud are you to be Mexican?” Very proud, quite proud, not very proud or not at all proud.

Coding: 1= “very proud”; 0= all other responses.

Distribution: percent saying “very proud” each year: 71% in 1997, 79% in 2000, and 83% in 2005.

*Religion very important*

Question (9): “For each of the following, indicate how important it is in your life. Would you say it is...”  
 “Religion”

Coding: 1= Not at all important; 2= Not very important 3= Rather important; 4= Very important.

Distribution:

	1997	2000	2005
% Not at all important	3	3	3
% Not very important	17	9	9
% Rather important	33	21	20
% Very important	45	66	67

Percentages do not add to 100% because “don't know” responses are not shown.

*Homosexuality justified:*

Question (202): “Please indicate for each of the following statements whether you think it can always be justified, never justified, or something in between.”

“Homosexuality”

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Never justified									Always justified

Coding: The scale was left as such (1 to 10) and “don’t know” responses (which varied from 3% to 8% depending on the year) were set as missing.

Distribution:

% 1997:

53	7	6	4	12	4	2	3	1	4
----	---	---	---	----	---	---	---	---	---

% 2000:

46	3	3	2	12	4	4	4	2	11
----	---	---	---	----	---	---	---	---	----

% 2005:

32	5	4	3	16	6	5	6	4	12
----	---	---	---	----	---	---	---	---	----

*Abortion justified:*

Question (204): “Please indicate for each of the following statements whether you think it can always be justified, never justified, or something in between.”

“Abortion”

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Never justified									Always justified

Coding: The scale was left as such (1 to 10) and “don’t know” responses (which varied from 3% to 5% depending on the year) were set as missing.

Distribution:

% 1997:

57	6	5	3	12	4	3	2	2	4
----	---	---	---	----	---	---	---	---	---

% 2000:

65	3	3	2	8	2	2	3	2	5
----	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

% 2005:

52	6	4	3	11	3	3	4	2	6
----	---	---	---	----	---	---	---	---	---

*Materialist-Postmaterialist values (4-item index):*

Questions (71 and 72): “People sometimes talk about what the aims of this country should be for the next ten years. If you had to choose, which one of the things below would you say is more important?”

- 1) Maintaining order in the nation
- 2) Giving people more say in important government decisions

- 3) Fighting rising prices
  - 4) Protecting freedom of speech
- “A which would be the next most important?”

Coding: The Materialist-Postmaterialist Values 4-item index combines responses to the two questions as follows:

Materialist values: any combination of responses 1 and 3.

Postmaterialist values: any combination of responses 2 and 4.

Mixed values: Any combination not included in the previous two.

The coding for the analysis is: 1= Materialist; 2=Mixed; 3=Postmaterialist.

Distribution:

	1997	2000	2005
% Materialist	21	26	19
% Mixed	62	59	61
% Postmaterialist	17	15	20

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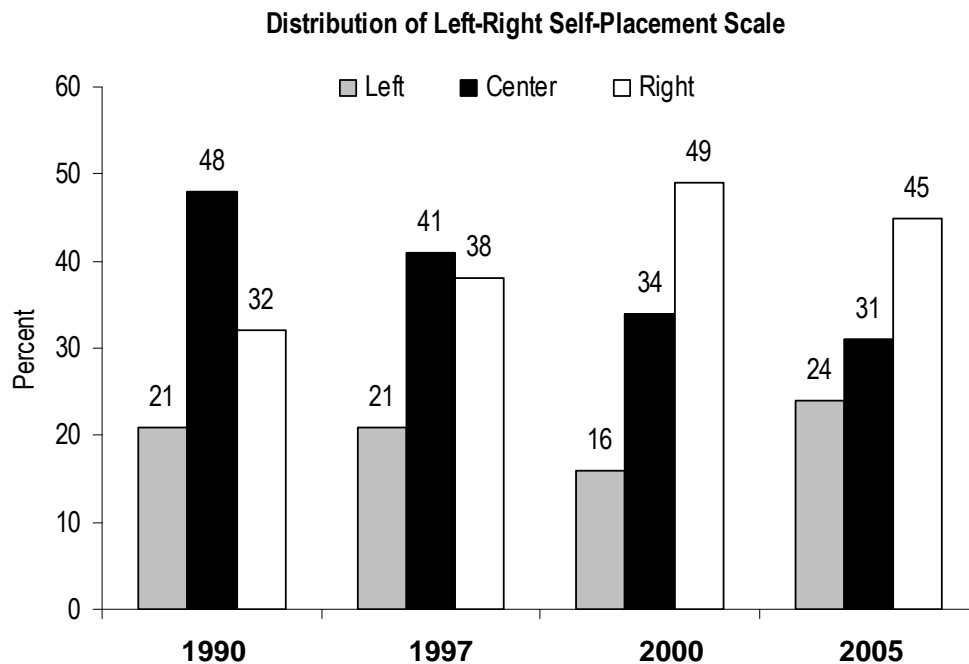
**Table 1. Increasing Party Competition in Mexico: Vote Share for Major Parties in National Congressional Elections, 1991-2003. (Percentages)**

	1991	1994	1997	2000	2003	2006
PAN	18	26	27	38	32	34
PRI	61	50	39	37	38	29
PRD	8	17	26	19	18	30
Otros	13	7	9	6	12	7
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Instituto Federal Electoral, IFE ([www.ife.org.mx](http://www.ife.org.mx))

Note: PRD ran in alliance with other minor parties in 1997, 2000, 2003, and 2006. PAN formed an alliance with the Green Ecologists (PVEM) in 2000, and the PRI formed an alliance with PVEM in 2003 and 2006.

**Figure 1. The Ideological Transformation of the Mexican Electorate, 1990-2005.**



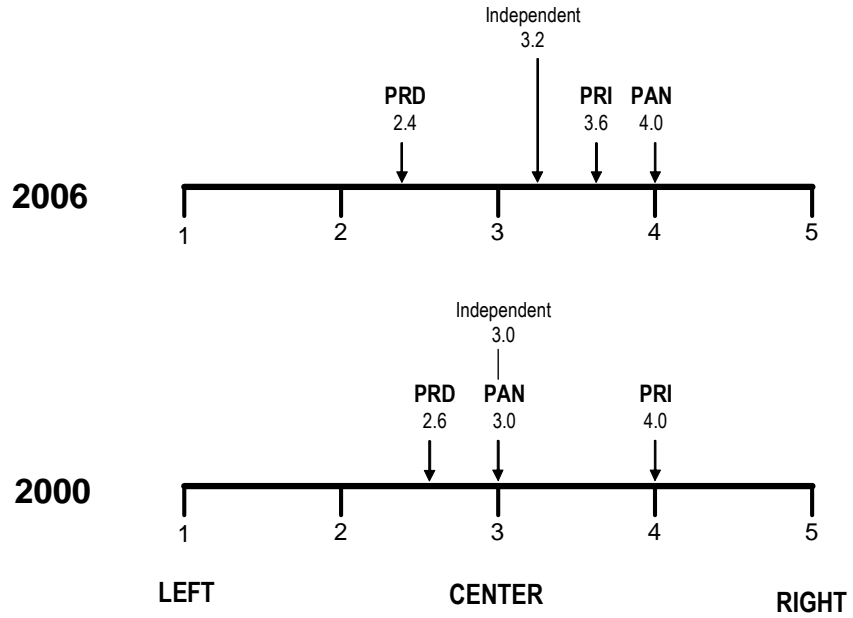
**Table 2. Predictors of Left and Right Self-Placement over Time: Multinomial Logistic Regression.** (Coefficients on table only show the left-right comparison, not the left-center one; the left is the base category)

	1997		2000		2005	
	b	sig.	b	sig.	b	sig.
Constant	-0.748		0.454		0.090	
Income equality vs. individual incentives	0.081	***	0.058	**	0.040	*
State vs. individual responsibility	0.087	***	-0.011		0.059	***
Respect for authority	0.335	*	0.441	**	0.106	
Strong support for democracy	-0.447	**	-0.347	*	-0.200	
National pride	-0.067		0.160		-0.160	
Religion very important	0.210	**	0.153		0.212	**
Homosexuality justified	-0.039		-0.020		-0.005	
Abortion justified	-0.032		-0.030		-0.030	
Materialist-Postmaterialist (4-item index)	-0.025		-0.154		-0.237	*
Cases analyzed	1,320		1,242		1,395	
Chi-squared	52.9		30.7		43.9	
Significance	0.000		0.031		0.001	
Pseudo R-Squared:						
Cox and Snell	0.039		0.024		0.031	
Nagelkerke	0.045		0.028		0.035	

Source: Mexican samples of the *World Values Survey*. Author's calculations.

Significance levels: \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*  $p < 0.1$

**Figure 2. Average Voter Placement on 5-Point Left-Right Scale by Partisanship, 2000-2006. (National Exit Polls).**



**Table 3. Ideology and the Vote: A Multinomial Logit Model of Presidential Vote Choice in 2000 and 2006.**

	2000			2006		
	PRD/PAN		PRI/PAN	PRD/PAN		PRI/PAN
Intercept	-0.430		-1.157 ***	2.047 ***		1.048 ***
Ideology <sup>a</sup>						
Left	0.399 *		-0.390 *	0.784 ***		0.309
Right	0.049		0.267	-0.274 **		-0.018
Partisanship <sup>b</sup>						
PAN	-2.861 ***		-2.483 ***	-2.720 ***		-1.950 ***
PRI	-0.744 **		2.883 ***	-0.340 *		2.695 ***
PRD	2.957 ***		0.053	2.823 ***		0.620 *
Evaluations <sup>c</sup>						
Presidential approval	0.036		0.818 ***	-1.213 ***		-1.317 ***
Personal economy	0.083		0.477 **	-0.696 ***		-0.531 ***
National economy	0.101		0.241	-0.524 ***		-0.478 **
Region <sup>d</sup>						
Urban/Rural (Rural)	-0.455 **		-0.271 *	-0.567 ***		0.062
Sex (Female)	0.333 *		0.364 **	0.153		0.626 ***
Age	0.151		0.360 **	-0.113		0.086
Education	0.040		0.037	-0.017		-0.049 *
Church attendance <sup>e</sup>	-0.212 **		-0.214 ***	-0.058		-0.263 ***
Church attendance <sup>e</sup>	-0.346 *		-0.267 *	-0.107		0.124
-2 Log Likelihood	6447.24			9944.86		
Chi-Square	3462.87			5047.52		
Sig.	0.000			0.000		
Pseudo R-Square						
Cox and Snell	0.66			0.65		
Nagelkerke	0.76			0.74		
McFadden	0.53			0.49		

Source: *Reforma* national exit polls.  
 Entries are multinomial logit coefficients.  
 Significance levels: \* p<.05; \*\* p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001

<sup>a</sup> Center and no-placement are base categories.

<sup>b</sup> Independents, other parties, and apolitical are base categories.

<sup>c</sup> Dummy variables: 1=Approve/Better off, 0=else.

<sup>d</sup> Dummy variable: 1=Northern and Central-Western regions, 0=Central and Southern regions.

<sup>e</sup> Dummy variable: 1=At least once a week, 0=else.

**Figure 3. Margin of Victory (or Defeat) of PAN Presidential Candidate against Main Contender, 2000-2006. (Estimated probabilities of Voting derived from Model Shown in Table 3).**

