

# **THE PERILS OF THE PLURALITY RULE:**

## **MEXICO'S THIRD-WAVE DEMOCRACY IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE**

Paper prepared for delivery at the Latin American Studies Association meeting in Barcelona, Spain, May 23-26, 2018.

*COMMENTS WELCOME!*

Cynthia McClintock  
Dept. of Political Science  
George Washington University  
Washington, D.C. 20052  
[mcclin@gwu.edu](mailto:mcclin@gwu.edu)

In recent decades, for the election of the president, most Latin American countries have shifted from a plurality rule (also called first-past-the-post) to a runoff rule (a second round if no candidate reaches a certain threshold of the vote, usually 50%). In Latin America prior to the 1970s, runoff was in place only in Costa Rica; but, as of 2018, runoff was in use by twelve of the eighteen Latin American countries.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, runoff rules are now predominant across the globe. In the 1950s, less than 10% of presidential elections worldwide were under majority runoff (runoff with a 50% threshold); but, as of 2000-2011, the figure had jumped to 60% (Bormann and Golder, 2013: 360-369).

As this shift from plurality to runoff implies, most political leaders favor runoff. In surveys among legislators that I carried out during 2006-2007 in several Latin American countries--primarily Chile, Mexico, and Peru--66% of 202 legislators preferred runoff (McClintock, 2018: 209-211). In Chile and Peru--two runoff countries--runoff was favored by 75% or more of the legislators; but runoff was also preferred in Mexico (by 44% versus 41% for plurality and 15% uncertain). My result was very similar to a survey of 280 legislators by the Mexican newspaper *Reforma*; in this survey, 53% favored runoff versus 47% plurality.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, in Mexico, plurality was criticized by two former presidents--Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderón--and by former presidential candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO).<sup>3</sup> These presidents' parties have also favored runoff, but, like entrenched parties elsewhere, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI), has opposed it (Shugart, 2007: 200).<sup>4</sup> Most Mexican citizens would also prefer that the plurality rule be replaced with runoff. In a national 2017 public-opinion survey, 77% of Mexican citizens favored runoff--up from 63% in 2009.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, to date, the vast majority of scholars prefer plurality. One of the foremost scholars of political institutions, Juan Linz (1994: 21-22), declared that "a number of dysfunctional consequences derive from this method of election [the runoff]" and elaborated. Arturo Valenzuela (1993: 8) commented: "the second round does not resolve the problem [of lack of majority support for the president]...What is more, the second ballot may have a counterproductive effect." Aníbal Pérez-Liñán (2006: 129) argued: "the empirical evidence suggests that both the necessity and convenience of this institution [runoff] can be questioned." Mark Jones (1995: 14) stated: "Unfortunately, despite the superiority of the plurality formula an overwhelming majority of emerging

presidential systems have selected the majority runoff formula.” Other scholars favoring plurality include Jorge I. Domínguez (2003: 371), Jonathan Hartlyn (1994: 46-49), Martín Tanaka (2005: 126-127), and Scott Mainwaring and Matthew S. Shugart (1997: 467-468). (However, numerous scholars of Mexican politics, including Jorge Castañeda and Marco Morales (2007:108-111), Denise Dresser,<sup>6</sup> George W. Grayson (2009), Jerry F. Hough (2006: A16), Fabrice Lehoucq,<sup>7</sup> and Gabriel Negretto (2007) have endorsed runoff.)

Accordingly, the question emerges: Is plurality or runoff the better rule for the election of presidents? There are two core differences between plurality and majority-runoff rules: the height of the barriers to entry to the electoral arena and the requirement for 50% of the popular vote.

The analysts who favor plurality have emphasized the advantage of higher barriers to entry for encouraging the consolidation of two political parties and impeding the proliferation of parties. For example, Matthew S. Shugart and John Carey (1992: 213) stated: “We find the plurality rule appealing because it is more likely than majority runoff to give voters an efficient choice between the candidates of two broad coalitions.” Seconded Scott Mainwaring and Matthew Shugart (1997: 467-468): “the run-off system... encourages fragmentation of the field of competitors for both presidency and assembly....The plurality rule, in contrast, encourages only two ‘serious’ contenders for the presidency in most cases.”

By contrast, analysts who favor runoff have emphasized the advantage of the requirement of 50% of the vote for presidents’ legitimacy and ideological moderation. In my 2006-2007 surveys with Latin American legislators cited above, 84 percent of the 133 legislators who preferred runoff cited greater legitimacy for the president as their reason (from a list of at least three reasons); it was the most commonly cited reason for legislators in all countries (McClintock, 2018: 210).

This paper tests these rival hypotheses through the experience of Mexico during Latin America’s third democratic wave. First, it shows that plurality advocates’ expectation for the consolidation of two political parties was not borne out. In the second section, it shows that runoff advocates’ concerns for presidents’ legitimacy deficits were borne out in the 2006 election and, in the third section, it shows that runoff advocates’ concerns for perceptions of ideological extremism were borne out. The third section

suggests also that, under plurality, a “vicious circle” emerged: in a context of higher barriers to entry and legitimacy deficits, a country’s political left is more likely to perceive a pattern of political exclusion by long-standing parties and more likely to play to its political base—thereby frightening the right, which may resort to undemocratic tactics to exclude it and, concomitantly, exacerbating the left’s anger and cynicism.

In the final section, the paper suggests that the problematic implications of the plurality rule were a factor in Mexico’s disappointing record during what is commonly called the “third democratic wave” in Latin America (1978-present). And, it shows that Mexico’s experience was not atypical; the trends in levels of democracy in Latin America between 1990 and 2016 were more positive in runoff countries than in plurality countries.

A few preliminaries are in order. The “number of political parties” is the “effective number of political parties” variable calculated through the index developed by Murkku Laakso and Rein Taagepera (1979) and the data are drawn from several sources.<sup>8</sup> The references below to “LAWR” and “LARR” refer respectively to the *Latin America Weekly Report* and *Latin America Regional Report* (Mexico), published by Latin America Newsletters. Electoral results are readily available from national electoral commissions on-line.

#### *THE PERILS OF PLURALITY: BARRIERS TO ENTRY AND THE NUMBER OF POLITICAL PARTIES*

Plurality raises barriers to entry and is expected to lead to two “broad coalitions.” First, this section examines this scholarly principle. Next, it explores why, in Mexico, the expectation for two “broad coalitions” was dashed—why three major political parties endured rather than coalescing into two. It focuses especially on Mexico’s 2000 election—arguably, the lost window of opportunity for an alliance in opposition to the long-standing incumbent party. Finally, it notes that, as of the 2012 election, no major new party had emerged during the third wave.

#### **The Plurality Rule and Barriers to Entry: Scholarly Principles**

It is clear that the plurality rule raises barriers to entry whereas the runoff rule lowers them. The principle that plurality encourages two parties but runoff enables many parties originated in the 1954 work of Maurice Duverger and is now conventional wisdom (Clark and Golder, 2006: 681). Stated Jones (1995: 93), for example: “In plurality systems [bargaining among political actors] takes place prior to the election,

whereas in majority systems it occurs after the first round of the elections.” Empirical evidence for the correlation between plurality and a smaller number of parties is ample (McClintock, 2018: 31).

Why are barriers to entry higher under plurality? A new party is rarely poised to win at the start. Under plurality, most citizens vote strategically for the candidate who has a chance to win that they prefer and a new party is a “spoiler” party. But, under runoff, citizens can vote sincerely in the first round for the candidate in the entire field whom they prefer (Norris, 2004: 49; Van de Walle, 2006: 88-89). Usually, a new party is not strong at its start, and must have sincere votes to win. A new party moving into contention is a party moving up in the polls; but voters will only know this if polls are accurate.

The two different “stages” of the election present an advantage for also-ran parties. Incumbents and frontrunners are exposed to the risks inherent in not one election, but two.<sup>9</sup> Even when a party does not reach the runoff, it gains power. In particular, a party can decide whether or not to make an endorsement (Jones, 1995: 92-93; Linz, 1994: 21-22; Negretto, 2007: 221).

Finally, most simply, there are greater chances of finishing either first or second than finishing first (Carey, 2003: 14; Jones 1995: 96-102; Linz, 1994: 21-22). As Valenzuela (1993: 8) stated: “many parties can run candidates with reasonable hopes of making the second round.”

However, although the plurality rule raises barriers to entry, it does not block entry; it encourages the consolidation of two parties, but does not mandate them. As I will discuss further below, the average number of parties in elections under the plurality rule in Latin America between 1990 and 2016 was almost three (McClintock, 2018: 31).

In political contexts of three or more parties, a party with authoritarian proclivities can seek to manipulate the electoral playing field to its advantage. And, it can seek to impede alliances among opposition parties—either newer or older opposition parties. If, in the conceptualization of Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair (2009: 753-756), this party is a “cartel” party—intertwined with the state--by definition it gains power over electoral laws and machinery and its efforts to impede these alliances are more likely to succeed.

Barriers to entry and victory under plurality are yet higher in Latin America due to the inaccuracy of pre-election opinion polls. Of course, when polls are inaccurate, it

is difficult to vote strategically. And, alliances are more difficult to forge because the polls are not trusted to indicate which opposition leader will be the strongest. I found that, in Latin America between 1988 and 2012, only 35 percent of the pre-election polls were correct within 5.0 points of the actual result at approximately one month before the election and only 39 percent were correct within 10.0 points at approximately three months (McClintock, 2018: 60). By contrast, for elections in France, Spain, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States between 2000 and 2012, 71 percent of the polls were correct within 5.0 points at approximately one month and 88 percent were correct within 10.0 points at approximately three months (McClintock, 2018: 60).

### **The Endurance of Three Major Political Parties in Mexico, 2000-2012**

Despite plurality, the number of political parties in Mexico averaged above 3.0; the number was 2.55 in 2000, 3.57 in 2006, and 3.56 in 2012. Why did plurality not lead to the two parties that plurality advocates expected? And why did a new party not emerge to seriously challenge one or more of these parties?

#### *The Failure of Strategic Coordination by Mexico's Opposition Parties in 2000*

As of 2000, Mexico's Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI), had been in power for seventy-one years and was widely considered a cartel party (Levitsky, 2001: 93-94). In the 1988 election, the PRI had committed "massive" fraud (Magaloni, 2006: 53-54); during the 1990s, at least 500 opposition activists were assassinated (Mossige, 2013: 7). Why did the opposition parties, the Partido Acción Nacional (National Action Party, PAN) and the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Party of the Democratic Revolution, PRD) fail to ally against the PRI? Why did they fail to ally despite the prevailing negative opinion of the PRI stated by Jorge Castañeda after the 2012 election:

"This guy [Enrique Peña Nieto] was elected with 38 percent of the vote, and his party hasn't gotten anywhere beyond that during the past 20 years. They have a glass ceiling that they can't crack through, and probably never will. The country just doesn't like these guys."<sup>10</sup>

The reasons for the failure of strategic coordination between the PAN and the PRD were various. First, although in 2000 both the PAN and the PRD were considered pro-democratic relative to the PRI, otherwise their ideological positions were far apart. Founded in 1939, the PAN had been the only significant opposition party until 1988; it

had been a rightist party, close to the Catholic Church and business groups. By contrast, the PRD emerged in opposition to the market reforms advanced by the PRI after the onset of the Latin American debt crisis in the early 1980s. Led by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, critics of the reforms left the PRI and competed in the 1988 election. Especially during the 1990s, the PRD suffered severely from repression and fraud by the PRI.

Second, the PRI worked to prevent a PAN-PRD alliance. In 1988, the incumbent PRI government promoted provisions that impeded party coalitions in presidential elections. Prior to 1988, parties were allowed to endorse another party's presidential candidate but run its own legislative candidates. But, in 1988, after successful coalition-building by the PRD, the PRI added onerous new requirements for the registration of coalitions (Bruhn, 2004: 136). To compete as a coalition, political parties were required to present a common slate of legislative candidates in a total of 628 races. In 1999, the PAN and the PRD tried to modify these new rules, but change was blocked by the PRI (Magaloni and Poiré, 2004: 270). In addition, as will be indicated below, the PRI manipulated opinion polls.

In 2000, Mexico's first democratic election was won by the PAN's Vicente Fox with 43%. Fox defeated the PRI's candidate, Francisco Labastida, by 6.5 points. In third place was the PRD with 17%. Fox's victory was a surprise; Labastida consistently led the opinion polls (McClintock, 2018: 238). Why, when it appeared that only through an alliance between the PAN and the PRD could the PRI behemoth be defeated after seventy-one years, was an alliance not achieved? The key reasons were the ideological distance and political-party rules mentioned above, leaders' ambitions, campaign-finance rules, and the PRI's manipulation of the polls.

At this time, the PAN and the PRD were much friendlier to each other than in subsequent elections, and it was virtually certain that Fox would have won most of the PRD vote in a runoff.<sup>11</sup> If there had been a runoff, the pressure upon Cárdenas to endorse Fox would have been great, and the endorsement was likely to have helped bridge the gaps between the PAN and the PRD.

Fox was a formidable candidate and ran an excellent campaign (Grayson, 2000). A former Coca-Cola executive, Fox emphasized that he was a successful businessman, not a traditional (corrupt) politician. He had joined the PAN only in 1987 and remained on the fringes of the party. First, he had won a seat in the Chamber of Deputies; then in

1991 he had lost a rigged race for governor of Guanajuato, but in 1994 had won it. Six-foot-five with trademark cowboy boots and earthy language, he was imposing and did well in both televised debates.

Fox presented himself as a humanitarian; he was accused of ideological zigzags. Fox considered the PAN “much too far to the right to win” and wanted to be at “the center-left” (Greene, 2002: 779-780). To this end, Fox took various positions traditionally opposed by the PAN, such as advocacy of a tax increase. Fox attracted prominent leftist intellectuals like Jorge Castañeda to his campaign and formed a broad coalition, called Alianza por el Cambio (Alliance for Change). The Alliance for Change included a party that was in name environmentalist as well as a splinter from the PRD led by Porfirio Muñoz Ledo. To gain the support of Muñoz Ledo, Fox made promises that might have satisfied the great bulk of the PRD: promises not to privatize the state oil company PEMEX and not to allow greater sway for the Roman Catholic Church in Mexico’s education or political system (Berman, 2000: 38; LAWR June 27 2000, p. 290).

However, the PRI’s Labastida, a former governor and former interior minister, was a solid candidate. He was not burdened by corruption charges (Lawson 2004: 7). The PRI was divided between its “dinosaurs” (the old guard given to authoritarian practices and a large state) and “the technocrats” (who had led the party since 1988 and promoted market reform). As the interior minister for the incumbent PRI government, Labastida was closer to the technocrats than the old guard. In part to signal that he did represent a “New PRI,” he promoted an unprecedented nationwide PRI primary for the nomination of its presidential candidate (which he won).

The PRD’s candidate was Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, who had been the standard-bearer for the left not only in 1988 but also in 1994. Dour by nature and in his third try for the presidency at sixty-six, he appeared old and tired, and was widely considered to have done a poor job as mayor of Mexico City. Cárdenas was likely to have continued to resent the fraud in the 1988 election; he remained committed to “an old-fashioned leftism” (“Happy Birthday, Señor Fox,” *The Economist*, July 8, 2000, p. 32; Greene, 2002: 779). Said scholar José Antonio Crespo: “[Cárdenas] has not been able to measure the enormous changes in Mexico since [1988].”<sup>12</sup> For Cárdenas and a significant sector of the PRD, the PAN was no different from the PRI; both were in the pockets of the rich (Berman, 2000: 37).

In September 1999, the two parties had come close to an accord. They agreed on a joint platform and manifesto (LARR October 26 1999, p. 2). But, for the selection of the presidential candidate, the PRD wanted a primary (in which the PRD was likely to be able to get out the vote better than the PAN) while the PAN favored simply the opinion polls (which Fox was leading). Compromise proposals were made but neither party conceded (LARR October 26 1999, p. 2; LAWR 23 May 2000, p. 231).

Campaign-finance rules were another factor (Bruhn, 2004: 136). In the six months before the election, Cárdenas rarely rose above 15% in the opinion polls and it appeared clear that he had no chance to win; Fox repeatedly called upon him to withdraw. But, Mexico's campaign-finance rules stipulated that state funds for a party were distributed according to its vote shares, and Cárdenas' withdrawal would have hurt the PRD's electoral tally and reduced state funds for the PRD in the future

Further, the PRI manipulated opinion polls. Trying to weaken the PAN's argument for a "voto útil" ("useful vote"), the PRI quashed opinion polls that predicted its defeat. Pollsters who predicted a Fox victory were harassed or worse and editors and publishers were pressured as well.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, many analysts believed that the PRI would do better than the opinion polls predicted due to election-day chicanery. Accordingly, most Mexicans and in particular most PRD voters believed that the PRI would win the election, and, if the PRI were going to win anyway, why should PRD voters sacrifice their principles?<sup>14</sup> Why should Cárdenas step aside for Fox?

Over the course of the campaign, animosities intensified and personal insults were hurled by both candidates (LARR 11 July 2000, p. 5). Still, as mentioned above, if there had been a runoff, the pressure upon the PRD to endorse Fox would have been immense.

By the 2012 election, Mexico's the PRI, the PAN, and the PRD endured as Mexico's three major political parties. As the next section indicates, new parties emerged, but none was able to become a significant contender, much less displace one of the three parties to become one of the top-two parties in the legislature. Whereas a "new party" achieved 15% of the vote in 48% of presidential elections between 1978 and 2012 under runoff—and indeed even in 31% of the elections under plurality, no new party achieved 15% in Mexico's three presidential elections (McClintock, 2018: 61).<sup>15</sup> And, like five of the other six countries that used plurality for most of the 1978-2012 period, the two leading parties in Mexico's most recent legislative election were the same as in

its first “third wave” legislative election, whereas in the countries that used runoff for most of this period, the two leading parties were the same in only two of the eleven countries.

Mexico’s 2012 election indicates the advantages that long-standing parties can enjoy, raising barriers to entry. The election was won by the PRI’s Enrique Peña Nieto with only 38%; the runner-up was AMLO with 32% and in third place was the PAN’s Josefina Vázquez Mota with 25%.

Peña Nieto, a popular governor of the state of Mexico with close ties to leaders of the PRI’s old guard, benefited from the historical advantages that the PRI had enjoyed as a cartel party. In part also because of Peña Nieto’s marriage to a star on the country’s largest television network, Televisa, it was believed that media coverage was heavily biased in his favor. Biased media coverage was a key factor in the emergence of an anti-Peña Nieto movement called *Yo Soy 132* (I am number 132), in reference to solidarity with 131 university-student protestors who had shown their student IDs after Peña Nieto’s campaign charged that they were working for a rival party.

Peña Nieto also benefited from the pre-election opinion polls, which in the context of the necessity of a strategic vote, gave a major advantage to the frontrunner. About six months before the election, Peña Nieto was forecast to enjoy 47% of voters’ preferences (McClintock, 2018: 238). Only a week before the election, most polls put the PRI ahead by about fifteen points, with the PRD and the PAN neck-and-neck for a distant second (LAWR June 28 2012, p. 13). The pollsters’ exaggeration of Peña Nieto’s lead was perceived in some sectors as an effort by elites to give the PRI an aura of inevitable victory, discouraging the PRD, the PAN, and any other rivals (Flores-Macías, 2013: 134 and 136). Also, for Mexico’s pro-democratic voters whose priority was the defeat of the PRI, it was not clear which opposition party to choose.

#### *THE PERILS OF PLURALITY: PRESIDENTS’ LEGITIMACY DEFICITS*

This section first discusses the concept of presidential legitimacy. Next, it argues that the plurality rule resulted in a presidential legitimacy deficit in Mexico’s 2006 election.

#### **The Concept of Presidential Legitimacy**

The concept of legitimacy is notoriously difficult to measure, and usually it is applied to the state. To the best of my knowledge, the only scholar who has analyzed the

concept of presidential legitimacy is Daniel Martínez (2004: 541-561), but his analysis is very brief. However, a classic definition of legitimacy is “the consent of the people;...legitimate government rests on the consent of the governed” (Plattner, 2009: 60), and it follows that, for many analysts, a president’s legitimacy is based on victory with a majority of the vote.

The perception that a president’s legitimacy is based on winning a majority of the vote is widespread. Wrote former Peruvian president Alejandro Toledo (2015: 132): “[in Latin America during the third wave] the number of two-round runoff systems has risen ...[and] countries have moved in the direction of increasing the *legitimacy* [italics mine] of presidential elections.” Said Peru’s Ambassador to Honduras about the possible results of Honduras’s 2013 election: “What kind of *legitimacy* [italics mine] would a president have with 30% of the vote? None.”<sup>16</sup> Colombia’s newsweekly *Semana* explained the origin of runoff in France to be “amid the proliferation of political parties, the authorities believed that greater *legitimacy* [italics mine] for the elected candidate was necessary.”<sup>17</sup>

Latin American leaders’ perceptions are based in part on their analyses of the causes of military coups during the second wave. The causes of coups in Argentina in 1963, Brazil in 1955, Chile in 1973, Ecuador in 1968, and Peru in 1962 were manifold, but the coups occurred after elections in which the incoming president had won only 25 percent, 36 percent, 37 percent, 33 percent, and 28 percent respectively and the concept of a lack of legitimacy was frequently invoked to help explain the coups (McClintock, 2018: 41-42).

### **Mexico’s 2006 Election: A Presidential Legitimacy Deficit**

Mexico’s 2006 election was officially won by the PAN’s Felipe Calderón with only 35.89% to 35.31% for the PRD’s Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO); the PRI finished third with 22%. It was controversial whether or not Calderón won by the existing rules and controversial whether or not he would have won a runoff. The result was perceived as illegitimate not only by the great bulk of the PRD but also, many surveys suggested, by a majority of Mexicans (Flores-Macías, 2013: 135; Bruhn, 2012: 105-107).

Calderón’s legitimacy deficit was highlighted by scholars. Stated Jacqueline Preschard: “His [Calderón’s] legitimacy is questioned by the proportion of the

population, neither less nor more, equivalent to the proportion that voted for him” (Preschard, 2008: 267, translation mine). Emphasized Craig Arceneaux (2013: 248): “Calderón’s supporters dismissed López Obrador’s claims of electoral fraud, but they found it much more difficult to reject the allegation that Calderón did not represent the popular will of the people, since he failed to collect votes from over 60% of the electorate.”

Elected mayor of Mexico City in 2000, AMLO was popular; he was the long-standing frontrunner for 2006. Indeed, in 2005 AMLO was the target of a dubious legal accusation that would have disqualified his 2006 presidential candidacy; it was widely believed that the PAN government was making the accusation for this reason. AMLO’s official positions were not particularly leftist; his key slogan was “For the good of all, the poor first” (Bruhn, 2012: 90-106; Mossige, 2013: 31-32). However, at campaign rallies AMLO was given to populist discourse--references to a corrupt elite that rules and a morally superior “people” (Bruhn, 2012: 90-106; Mossige, 2013: 31-32).

Calderón was a mainstream PAN leader. His father had been a founder of the PAN, and he had served as secretary of energy during the Fox administration. The PRI’s Roberto Madrazo was not a strong candidate. A former governor of the state of Tabasco, he was a long-standing PRI leader from the old guard.

Three months before the election, Calderón remained way behind in the polls and decided to “go negative” (Bruhn, 2012: 100-107). Calderón launched attack ads, charging that AMLO was “a danger to Mexico”; in one ad, AMLO’s face morphed into Hugo Chávez’s (Mossige, 2013: 30). These ads were illegal under Mexican law but the PRD’s complaints to the electoral commission were addressed very slowly. AMLO’s fiery discourse at campaign rallies enabled Calderón’s negative campaign to succeed (Bruhn, 2012: 90-106).

The official result--the PAN’s victory by a mere 244,000 votes--was immediately rejected by AMLO. He charged that the PAN had violated numerous election laws—which was true (not only provisions against negative ads but also against the incumbent’s intervention in the campaign). He also charged that many PRD ballots had not been counted.

The PRD’s frustration was intensified by uncertainty about whether Calderón or AMLO would have had majority support in a runoff.<sup>18</sup> The PRI vote was likely to have

divided closely between the PAN and the PRD. Some experts gave the edge to the PRD.<sup>19</sup> Others cited the PAN.<sup>20</sup>

The uncertainty was exacerbated by the impact of minor parties in the election. Arguably, Calderón won because he had struck an alliance with a new party, the Partido Nueva Alianza (New Alliance Party, PANAL), founded by Elba Esther Gordillo, a former PRI leader and the head of the teachers' union. As legally required, PANAL had its own presidential candidate, Roberto Campa; however, Gordillo urged votes for PANAL legislative candidates but Calderón for president. Ultimately Campa won just under 1% of the vote but PANAL's legislative candidates more than 4%; in all probability, most of the 3% difference went to Calderón.

By contrast, AMLO did not reach out to another minor party, the Partido Alternativa Socialdemócrata y Campesina (Social Democratic and Peasant Alternative Party, PASC). In the views of its members, the PASC was the "true left"—to the left not only on economic issues but also social issues such as women's rights and gay marriage, and committed to a more open, democratic polity. In the first round, the PASC's candidate, Patricia Mercado, won 2.8% of the vote. Apparently, given AMLO's strong lead in the polls at the time that any discussion would have had to occur, he was confident of victory and felt no need to reach out to Mercado (Grayson, 2007: 259 and LARR July 2006, p. 4). The great majority of Mercado's votes would have gone to AMLO in a runoff (LARR December 2011, p. 3).

López Obrador demanded a "ballot by ballot" recount. Mexico's Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) agreed to only a partial recount; in this recount, no evidence of vote fraud emerged. Unfortunately, the IFE included representatives from the PAN and the PRI but not the PRD.<sup>21</sup> López Obrador was not mollified and continued to demand a full recount. It was not an outrageous demand under the circumstances, but the IFE was adamantly opposed (Mossige, 2013: 43).

Immediately after his inauguration, Calderón made the fateful decision to launch a military offensive against Mexico's drug lords. In most analysts' views, Calderón was concerned about his government's legitimacy and hoped that, with this decision, he would assert his authority (González, 2009: 74-75; Starr, 2012: 47).<sup>22</sup> Stated Max Fisher and Amanda Taub for *The New York Times*, for example: "Shortly after taking office, the new president declared war on the cartels and sent in the military. Critics say Mr.

Calderón sought to legitimize his presidency through the use of force.”<sup>23</sup> This view was not unanimous, however; Calderón was from Michoacán where the deadly La Familia drug cartel held sway, and Calderón might have taken action in any case.<sup>24</sup> During Calderón’s six-year term, more than 50,000 people died in the ensuing violence.

#### *THE PERILS OF PLURALITY: PERCEPTIONS OF IDEOLOGICAL EXTREMISM*

This section first discusses the concept of left-right extremism and its measurement in this paper. Then, it describes the failure of the PRD to moderate during the 2000s and the continuing perception in Mexico of the PRD’s leftist extremism.

#### **The Concept of Ideological Extremism**

Various analysts have posited that plurality enables a presidential candidate to play to his or her “base,” whereas runoff is an incentive for moderation (Cheibub, 2007: 109; Smith, 2005: 157-158). Said a Chilean legislator, for example: “The runoff obliges candidates to adopt a discourse that is inclusive, appealing to a majority of voters rather than to only thirty percent.”<sup>25</sup> One scholar, Josep Colomer (2004 and 2007), has developed the argument in detail, including empirical evidence for presidents’ support from the “median voter.”

The question is especially important in Latin America during the third wave; in many countries, it was necessary that a long-standing authoritarian right or center accommodate a left with various degrees of Marxist ideology. During the Cold War, Marxist parties had grown in many countries; but, for the most part, there had been a “veto against the left” (Reid: 2007: 280). After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, Marxist ideology was in retreat, but the debt crisis continued and economic growth was low and inequality severe. For some voters who wanted change, Marxist political perspectives were compelling.

Yet, the validity of the concepts of “extremism” and “moderation,” and indeed left-right classifications in general, have been questioned. It is argued that political issues are varied and may not be captured by a single left-right dimension; indeed, left-right positions among Latin American citizens have been shown to be not particularly coherent (Zechmeister and Corral, 2013). In other words, citizens may have a “left” position on one issue, a “right” position on another, and a third position that cannot be classified within the left-right framework at all. Voters may not know their positions and may misclassify themselves (Sides, 2006: 408-409).

Still, the concepts of left and right are used very often by scholars. A recent definition of the left is offered by Murillo, Oliveros, and Vaishnav (2011: 53): “The Left refers to political actors who seek, as a central programmatic objective, to reduce social and economic inequalities...” Similarly, Juan Pablo Luna and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (2014: 4) state that the difference between left and right is the belief that the “main inequalities between people” are “artificial and therefore should be counteracted by active state involvement” or are “natural and outside the purview of the state.”

Legislators’ perceptions of the ideological positions of leaders and parties, based on a ten-point scale from 1.0 at the furthest left to 10.0 at the furthest right, have been reported in the Parliamentary Elites of Latin America (PELA) project at <http://americo.usal.es/oir> (*series temporales* and *eliteca*), directed by Manuel Alcántara at the Universidad de Salamanca. Beginning in 1993, but carried out consistently only by the late 1990s through approximately 2010, legislators in eighteen Latin American nations were surveyed near the start of their terms on a wide array of issues. Unfortunately, the surveys did not invariably include all parties and leaders; also, surveys for some countries (in particular Brazil and Venezuela) are scanty and others are missing for some years (for example, Ecuador for 2006). Further, some samples are small and not representative of the shares of legislative seats held by the parties (Kitschelt, Hawkins, Luna, Rosas, and Zechmeister, 2010: 348-351).

Still, the PELA surveys “represent a quantum leap in our knowledge” (Kitschelt, Hawkins, Luna, Rosas, and Zechmeister, 2010: 341). They are exceptionally fine-grained (McClintock, 2018: 45). Also, in the PELA surveys the legislators of a country are classifying a party or leader as “extreme” or “moderate” within the ideological context of their country, and it is arguably these leaders’ perceptions that matter most. The survey results have been used and reported by numerous scholars (Carlin, Singer, and Zeicheister, 2015: 15-16; Kitschelt, Hawkins, Luna, Rosas, and Zechmeister, 2010: 59, 65-67, 341-343; Luna, 2014: 122-139; Mainwaring, Torcal, and Somma, 2015: 95; Singer, 2016).

### **The Perception of Ideological Extremism of Mexico’s Left**

From the first PELA survey in 1998 through the most recent in 2010, Mexico’s PRD has been placed at the “extreme left” by Mexico’s legislators.<sup>26</sup> In 1998, it was placed at 2.68; in 2001, at 2.56; in 2004, at 2.78; in 2006 (after the election), at 2.30; and,

in the most recent survey in 2010, at 2.79. AMLO was included in the 2001, 2004, and 2006 surveys and was also consistently placed at the “extreme left”: 2.84 in 2001, 3.15 in 2004, and 2.21 in 2006. As I will discuss further below, this “extreme left” classification was common for leftist parties and candidates in plurality countries but rare for leftist parties and candidates in runoff countries. In runoff countries, numerous presidential candidates were perceived to shift from the “extreme left” to the “center left” over the course of one or more elections and ultimately prevailed; these candidates included Brazil’s Luiz Inácio (Lula) da Silva, Guatemala’s Álvaro Colom, Peru’s Ollanta Humala, and Uruguay’s Tabaré Vázquez.

Why did AMLO and the PRD not shift towards the political center? It was not atypical for Latin American lefts to originate, as the PRD’s predecessor did, within a context of severe economic inequality and political repression. Indeed, in the 1990s, PRD candidates were robbed of victories in many sub-national elections and AMLO himself was the victim of fraud in his race for governor of the state of Tabasco. But, for Mexico’s left, significant political exclusion was perceived to continue—exacerbating the left’s skepticism about democratic institutions in general, which in turn exacerbated mainstream Mexicans’ perceptions of the left’s extremism. As noted above, the plurality rule, raising barriers to entry and permitting presidents to win without majority support, was part and parcel of this pattern of exclusion.

As mentioned above, AMLO believed that he was the victim of fraud in 2006 and that he would have won a runoff. After the election, he led street protests that disrupted Mexico City for months. Notoriously, about three months after the election, López Obrador proclaimed “To hell with your institutions!” Virtually throughout Calderón’s six-year term, AMLO claimed to be the “legitimate president.” Although various political reforms were made by the PAN government, AMLO was dismissive, favoring “changing the entire political system into a new, as yet undefined, ‘Fourth Republic’” (Mossige, 2013: 203).

AMLO’s intransigence played to the PRD’s base. His protests resonated among staunchly leftist voters but not at the center of the political spectrum (Bruhn, 2012: 103-112; Flores-Macías, 2013: 137-138; Mossige, 2013: 47 and 56).<sup>27</sup> AMLO might have calculated that his intransigence would assure him the PRD’s nomination in 2012 (Bruhn, 2012: 103-108). His protests were likely to have doomed any possibility of a future

alliance between the PRD and the PAN; AMLO presumably believed that, given Mexico's plurality rule, he could win in 2012 without an accommodation with the PAN.

For the 2012 election, AMLO moderated his discourse considerably (Flores-Macías, 2013: 132; Mossige, 2013: 305). AMLO's slogan and overall theme was "a loving republic." Unfortunately, no PELA survey is available after 2010, but it appears that AMLO's effort to shift away from the extreme left was not credible. The specter of AMLO's intransigence after the 2006 election endured. Said political scientist Denise Dresser: "A lot of people don't believe his transformation to a loving leftist."<sup>28</sup> Seconded scholar Sergio Aguayo: "The takeover of Reforma [the main boulevard in Mexico City] is part of his black legend. He has tried to exorcise it, but he hasn't succeeded."<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Flores-Macías (2013: 137) stated:

"The reluctance of some sectors of the Mexican left to view the 'rules of the game' as legitimate and worth respecting is a big reason why they cannot shake the specter of radicalism and suspicions that they are an 'antisystem' force. The postelectoral protests that disrupted everyday life in Mexico City in 2006 fed an image of obstructionism that turned off many of those who had been AMLO's supporters."

Arguably, AMLO could have overcome his past repudiation of Mexico's political institutions through a calm concession after the 2012 election. But, once again, he charged fraud. In particular, he charged vote-buying by the PRI and asked that Mexico's electoral commission annul the election. AMLO's repudiation of the election was not supported by the PRD and AMLO announced that he would leave the PRD and form his own movement.

#### TRENDS IN LEVELS OF DEMOCRACY, 1990-2016: MEXICO IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Mexico's third-wave democratic record was disappointing. Two indices of levels of democracy that are widely used for Latin American nations are the Freedom House index ([www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org)) and the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Liberal Democracy index ([www.v-dem.net](http://www.v-dem.net)); in both indices, Mexico's scores eroded between 2000 and 2016. In 2000, the country's Freedom House score was above the Latin American average but it declined in 2006 and in 2010, and from 2010 through 2016 was below the regional average. Similarly but not identically, Mexico's 2000-2005 V-Dem

scores approximated the regional average but fell gradually after 2006 and, by 2016, had fallen about 15%. Further, at roughly 65%, voter turnout was below the regional average.

However, Mexico's disappointing third-wave democratic record was not uncommon among plurality countries. I elaborated a dataset in which the level of democracy, measured by the Freedom House and V-Dem indices, was the dependent variable and electoral rule—plurality or runoff—was the independent variable. As is conventional practice, I added Freedom House scores for political rights and civil liberties, so that the best possible score was 2 and the worst possible score 14, and normalized scores, so that 100 was the best and 0 the worst. In the V-Dem Liberal Democracy index, a perfect score is 1.00 and the nadir 0.

For most Latin American countries, the classification of plurality and runoff rules was straightforward. Throughout the third wave, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and Venezuela used plurality. Either at the start of the third wave in the country or subsequently, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Peru, and Uruguay shifted to majority runoff.

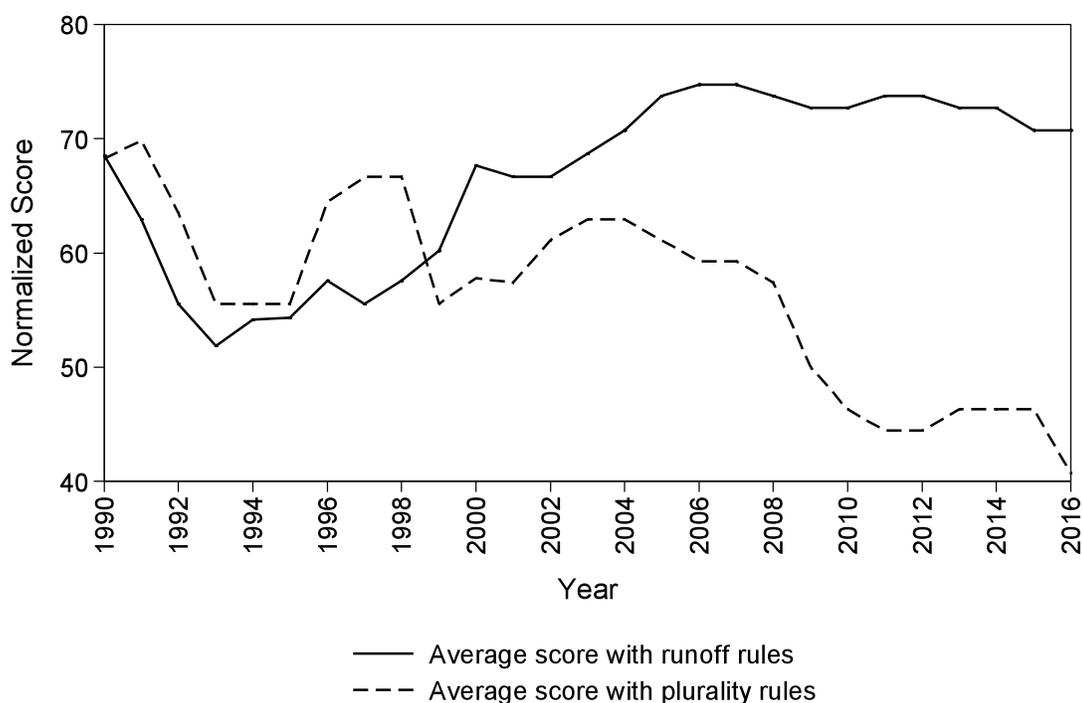
However, two anomalies raised classification questions. First, until 2009, Bolivia's rule was an exception: if no candidate tallied 50%, the president was selected by the legislature from among the top two finishers (or, prior to 1990, the top three finishers). Following conventional scholarly opinion, I omitted Bolivia from the study. Second, I classified thresholds for a first-round victory between 40 percent and 50 percent as runoff but thresholds below 40 percent as plurality. Why? Because a threshold below 40 percent is widely deemed so low as tantamount to plurality. The only country with such a threshold for more than one election was Nicaragua. The threshold was promoted in 2000 by former president Daniel Ortega, who at the time was seeking re-election but doubted that he could win more than 40 percent in a first round or a subsequent runoff.

The year 1990 was selected as the start year for the analysis. Countries were only included after they were widely considered to have transited to democracy because election rules usually matter only in free and fair elections. Also, prior to 1990, five countries (El Salvador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, and Nicaragua) were still widely considered not to have transited to democracy, and the entry of a new country or set of countries shifts the average score for runoff or plurality towards the traditional level of

democracy of the country entering the dataset. (In other words, when Chile entered the dataset, the average score for runoff countries increased.)

Figure 1 graphs the trajectory of Freedom House scores under runoff versus plurality between 1990 and 2016. Average Freedom House scores were similar between 1990 and 1998 but subsequently improved under runoff and plummeted under plurality. Between 2011 and 2016, the difference was approximately thirty percentage points.

**Figure 1 Presidential-election Rules and Freedom House Scores, 1990-2016**



Similarly, between 1990 and 2016, V-Dem Liberal Democracy scores for plurality countries plummeted (McClintock, 2018: 20). However, the scores for runoff countries did not improve quite as much after 1998 in the V-Dem index and more clearly dipped after 2014.

To assess whether it was presidential-election rules or other factors that affected levels of democracy, I conducted regression analysis. A runoff rule was coded as 1 and a plurality rule as 0. Control variables included: GDP per capita (in constant 2010 U.S. dollars); the annual percentage change in GDP growth, the Gini coefficient of inequality; education (percentage for completion of primary school); the age of the democratic regime; and the effective number of political parties (ENPP). In addition, because the relationship between ENPP and levels of democracy was non-linear, I introduced a quadratic (squared) term of ENPP. To account for potential unobserved heterogeneity, I used a random effects linear model. (However, the results from an Ordinary Least Squares model were similar.) Further information and sources are available in McClintock (2018: 21-27).

In the regression analysis, presidential-election rule was statistically significant. Runoff was significant to superior Freedom House and V-Dem scores at the .05 level and, of course, plurality also significant to inferior Freedom House and V-Dem scores at the .05 level. Among the control variables, only the Gini coefficient was significant at the .05 level or better; surprisingly, more severe inequality was positively related to V-Dem scores at the .01 level. Again, further information is available in McClintock (2018: 21-27).

The perils of the plurality rule that obstructed democracy in Mexico were evident elsewhere. Among the six plurality countries, levels of democracy also fell in Honduras, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, and the level remained low in Paraguay; only in Panama was the level of democracy consistently above the regional average.

As in Mexico, one peril of plurality elsewhere was higher barriers to entry. I have already noted above that, under plurality, new parties were less likely to become “significant contenders” and that the two leading parties in the first third wave election were more likely to remain the two leading parties in the most recent election through 2012. And, as in Mexico, the endurance of a political party with authoritarian proclivities was often complicit in the division of its opposition and, in general, a factor in a sub-par democratic trajectory. This was the case for the Asociación Nacional Republicana (National Republican Association, ANR), or Colorado Party, in Paraguay, and also the case for two “duopolies” (two parties that tolerated competition with each other but colluded to exclude other parties): in Honduras, the Liberal and National parties prior to

2005 and, in Venezuela, Acción Democrática (Democratic Action) and COPEI in Venezuela prior to 1993 (McDonald and Ruhl, 1989: 112-122; Taylor-Robinson, 2001: 594; Levine, 1994: 170; Coppedge, 1994: 41-51).

Further, as in Mexico, two “broad coalitions” often did not form; indeed, the average number of political parties under plurality between 1990 and 2016 was about 2.90 (McClintock, 2018: 31). In this context, a considerable number of elections under plurality between 1978 and 2012 were won with less than 50% of the vote; I identified 24 such elections.

Of these elections, I found that victory by the first-round winner was virtually certain only in 37.5%; the result was uncertain in 33% and victory by the first-round runner-up was virtually certain in 29%. Often, democratic principles were discredited and the president’s legitimacy deficit was problematic. Just as Calderón struggled in Mexico, Juan Carlos Wasmosy was almost overthrown after his victory with 40% in 1993 in Paraguay; Fernando Lugo was impeached after his victory with 41% in 2008 in Paraguay; and Rafael Caldera struggled after his victory with only 32% in Venezuela in 1993.

In addition, some of these elections enabled the return to power of parties with authoritarian proclivities; in particular, the 2006 election in Nicaragua enabled the return to power of Ortega’s Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (Sandinista National Liberation Front, FSLN), with a mere 38% of the vote. It was believed that Ortega would have lost a runoff to any of his three rivals (LAWR, September 19, 2006, p. 13; LAWR, October 3, 2006, p. 13).

Another peril of plurality that emerged elsewhere was the vicious circle of political exclusion by traditional parties, continued disrespect for democracy and ideological extremism by leftist parties, and continued resort to authoritarian tactics by traditional parties. Between 2000 and 2012, a president or top presidential candidate was classified at the extreme left in PELA surveys not only in Mexico but also in Honduras, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. In Honduras, the leader was Manuel Zelaya, elected in 2005 and overthrown in a coup in 2008; in Nicaragua, Ortega; and, in Venezuela, Hugo Chávez, elected in 1998 after a disputed 1993 presidential contest and becoming more authoritarian after a failed 2002 coup attempt. By contrast, not one president or top presidential candidate was classified at the moderate left.

By the same logic, between 2002 and 2012, a president or top presidential candidate was classified at the “extreme right” (8.00 to 10.00 on the PELA scale) in three of the six plurality countries (50%) but only four of the eleven runoff countries (36%) (McClintock, 2018: 48). An “extreme right” president or top presidential candidate did not emerge in Mexico, but did in Honduras (Ricardo Maduro), Nicaragua (Enrique Bolaños), and Panama (Ricardo Martinelli).

The pattern in runoff countries was very different: a president or top presidential candidate was classified at the extreme left in only one of the eleven countries (Mauricio Funes in El Salvador), whereas a president or top presidential candidate was classified at the moderate left in eight (Néstor Kirchner in Argentina, Lula and Dilma Rousseff in Brazil, Ricardo Lagos and Michelle Bachelet in Chile, Ottón Solís in Costa Rica, Rafael Correa in Ecuador, Colom in Guatemala, Humala in Peru, and Vázquez and José Mujica in Uruguay). I believe that the lower barriers to entry under runoff persuaded leftist parties that their country’s democracy was “real”—inclusive, not exclusive; and, these parties gained respect for the democratic process. In turn, rightist parties were less frightened by their rise and did not resort to undemocratic tactics to exclude them.

As mentioned above, Panama was the only plurality country that sustained high levels of democracy. In many respects, Panama is the exception that proves the rule. The average number of parties in Panama was the largest among the six plurality countries—3.65 between 1994 and 2014 (McClintock, 2018: 100); its political arena was relatively open to newcomers. Perhaps because of the relative openness of the political arena, the country’s stellar economic growth, and the leftist historical credentials of one of its leading parties, the Partido Revolucionario Democrático (Democratic Revolutionary Party, PRD), no leftist party emerged. Polarization was limited. Concomitantly, although the 1994 and 2004 elections were won without 50% and the results of runoffs would have been uncertain, questions about the presidents’ legitimacy were not salient.

## CONCLUSION

A critical question for the future of democracy is: “Under what conditions do political institutions develop that are capable of promoting economic and social elites’ accommodation to democracy?” (Middlebrook, 2000: 1). And, of course, a critical parallel question is: Under what conditions do political institutions develop that are

capable of promoting formerly Marxist or other leftist actors' accommodation to democracy? This paper has indicated that, in Mexico, plurality failed to promote either elites' or the left's accommodation to democracy. Based on the record of other Latin American countries, the paper also indicated that runoff is more likely to promote accommodation to democracy.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Berman, Paul. 2000. "Mexico's Third Way." *The New York Times Magazine*, 2 July, 34-39.
- Bormann, Nils-Christian and Matt Golder. 2013. "Democratic Electoral Systems around the world, 1946-2011," *Electoral Studies* 32 (2): 360-369.
- Bruhn, Kathleen. 2004. "The Making of the Mexican President, 2000: Parties, Candidates, and Campaign Strategy." In *Mexico's Pivotal Democratic Election: Candidates, Voters, and the Presidential Campaign of 2000*, eds. Jorge I. Domínguez & Chappell Lawson, 123-56. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bruhn, Kathleen. 2012. "To Hell with Your Corrupt Institutions." In *Populism in Europe and the Americas*, eds. Cas Mudde & Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, 88-112. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Carey, John M. 2003. "Presidentialism and Representative Institutions." In *Constructing Democratic Governance in Latin America*, eds. Jorge I. Domínguez and Michael Shifter, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 11-42. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Carlin, Ryan E., Matthew M. Singer, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister. 2015. "Introduction to the Latin American Voter." In *The Latin American Voter: Pursuing Representation and Accountability in Challenging Contexts*, eds. Ryan E. Carlin, Matthew M. Singer, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister, 1-30. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Castañeda, Jorge and Marco Morales. 2007. "The Mexican Standoff: Looking to the Future." *Journal of Democracy* 18(1): 103-112.
- Cheibub, José Antonio. 2007. *Presidentialism, Parliamentarianism, and Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Colomer, Josep M. 2004. "The Americas: General Overview." In *Handbook of Electoral System Choice*, ed. Josep M. Colomer, 81-109. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Colomer, Josep M. 2007. *Non-Median and Condorcet-loser Presidents in Latin America: A Factor of Instability*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association. Chicago, IL, August 30-September 2.

- Coppedge, Michael. 1994. "Prospects for Democratic Governability in Venezuela." *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs* 36(2): 39-64.
- Domínguez, Jorge I. 2003. "Taking Stock of the 1990s." In *Constructing Democratic Governance in Latin America*, eds. Jorge I. Domínguez & Michael Shifter, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 351-81. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Flores-Macías, Gustavo. 2013. "Mexico's 2012 Elections: The Return of the PRI." *Journal of Democracy* 24(1): 128-141.
- Grayson, George W. 2000. *Mexico's President Vicente Fox Quesada*. Foreign Policy Research Institute. 7 July. Online: [www.fpri.org](http://www.fpri.org).
- Grayson, George W. 2007. *Mexican Messiah: Andrés Manuel López Obrador*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Greene, Kenneth F. 2002. "Opposition Party Strategy and Spatial Competition in Dominant Party Regimes: A Theory and the Case of Mexico." *Comparative Political Studies* 35(7): 755-783.
- Greene, Kenneth F. 2007. *Why Dominant Parties Lose: Mexico's Democratization in Comparative Perspective*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hartlyn, Jonathan. 1994. "Los problemas de una segunda ronda electoral." *Revista Rumbo* 37 (October 5-11): 46-9.
- Hough, Jerry F. 2006. "A Closer Look at a Close Vote in Mexico." *The Washington Post*, 21 July.
- Jones, Mark P. 1995. *Electoral Laws and the Survival of Presidential Democracies*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Katz, Richard S., and Peter Mair. 2009. "The Cartel Party Thesis: A Restatement." *Perspectives on Politics* 7(4):753-66.
- Kitschelt, Herbert, Kirk A. Hawkins, Juan Pablo Luna, Guillermo Rosas, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister. 2010. *Latin American Party Systems*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Laakso, Murkku, and Rein Taagepera. 1979. "Effective Number of Parties: A Measure with Application to West Europe." *Comparative Political Studies* 12(1): 3-27.
- Lawson, Chappell. 2004. "Introduction." In *Mexico's Pivotal Democratic Election: Candidates, Voters, and the Presidential Campaign of 2000*, eds. Jorge I. Domínguez and Chappell Lawson, 1-24. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

- Levine, Daniel H. 1994. "Goodbye to Venezuelan Exceptionalism." *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs* 36(4): 145-82.
- Levitsky, Steven. 2001. "Inside the Black Box: Recent Studies of Latin American Party Organizations." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 36(2): 92-110.
- Linz, Juan J. 1994. "Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy: Does It Make a Difference?" In *The Failure of Presidential Democracy*, eds. Juan J. Linz & Arturo Valenzuela, 3-89. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Luna, Juan Pablo. 2014. *Segmented Representation: Political Party Strategies in Unequal Democracies*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Luna, Juan Pablo, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser. 2014. "Introduction." In *The Resilience of the Latin American Right*, eds. Juan Pablo Luna and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, 1-24. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Magaloni, Beatriz. 2006. *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and Its Demise in Mexico*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Magaloni, Beatriz, and Alejandro Poiré. 2004. "Strategic Coordination in the 2000 Mexican Presidential Race." In *Mexico's Pivotal Democratic Election: Candidates, Voters, and the Presidential Campaign of 2000*, eds. Jorge I. Domínguez and Chappell Lawson, 264-282. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Mainwaring, Scott P., and Matthew S. Shugart. 1997. "Juan Linz, Presidentialism and Democracy: A Critical Appraisal." *Comparative Politics* 29(4): 449-72.
- Mainwaring, Scott, Mariano Torcal, and Nicolás M. Somma. 2015. "The Left and the Mobilization of Class Voting in Latin America." In *The Latin American Voter: Pursuing Representation and Accountability in Challenging Contexts*, eds. Ryan E. Carlin, Matthew M. Singer, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 69-98.
- Martínez, Rafael. 2004. "Conclusiones." In *DV: La Elección Presidencial Mediante Doble Vuelta en Latinoamérica*, ed. Rafael Martínez, 539-62. Barcelona, Spain: Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials.
- McClintock, Cynthia. 2012. *Electoral Rules and Democracy in Latin America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- McDonald, Ronald H., and Mark J. Ruhl. 1989. *Party Politics and Elections in Latin America*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Middlebrook, Kevin J. 2000. "Introduction: Conservative Parties, Elite Representation, and Democracy in Latin America." In *Conservative Parties, the Right, and*

- Democracy in Latin America*, ed. Kevin J. Middlebrook, 1-51. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Mossige, Dag. 2013. *Mexico's Left: The Paradox of the PRD*. Boulder, CO: First Forum Press (A division of Lynne Rienner).
- Murillo, María Victoria, Virginia Oliveros, and Milan Vaishnav. 2011. "Economic Constraints and Presidential Agency." In *The Resurgence of the Latin American Left*, eds. Steven Levitsky and Kenneth M. Roberts, 52-70. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Negretto, Gabriel L. 2007. "Propuesta para una reforma electoral en México." *Política y Gobierno XIV* (1): 215-227.
- Negretto, Gabriel L. 2013. *Making Constitutions: Presidents, Parties, and Institutional Choice in Latin America*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Norris, Pippa. 2004. *Electoral Engineering: Voting Rules and Political Behavior*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Payne, Mark J., Daniel Zovatto G., and Mercedes Mateo Díaz. 2007. *Democracies in Development: Politics and Reform in Latin America*. Washington, D.C.: Inter-American Development Bank.
- PELA (Parliamentary Elites of Latin America, Proyecto Elites Parlamentarias Iberoamericanas). Universidad de Salamanca. Online: <http://americo.usal.es.oir>.
- Pérez-Liñán, Aníbal. 2006. "Evaluating Presidential Runoff Elections." *Electoral Studies* 25(1): 129-46.
- Plattner, Marc. 2009. "From Liberalism to Liberal Democracy." In *Democracy: A Reader*, eds. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, 58-72. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Preschard, Jacqueline. 2008. "Elecciones 2006 en México : La Legitimidad Disputada." In *Elecciones y Política en América Latina*, eds. Manuel Alcántara Sáez and Fátima García Díez, 243-70. México, D.F.: Instituto Electoral del Estado de México.
- Reid, Michael. 2007. *Forgotten Continent: The Battle for Latin America's Soul*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Shugart, Matthew S. 2007. "Mayoría relativa vs. Segunda vuelta : La elección presidencial mexicana de 2006 en perspectiva comparada." *Política y Gobierno XIV*(1): 175-201.
- Shugart, Matthew S., and John Carey. 1992. *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Sides, John. 2006. "The Origins of Campaign Agendas." *British Journal of Political Science* 36(3): 407-36.
- Singer, Matthew W. 2016. "Elite Polarization and the Electoral Impact of Left-Right Placements: Evidence from Latin America." *Latin American Research Review* 51(2): 174-194.
- Smith, Peter H. 2005. *Democracy in Latin America: Political Change in Comparative Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tanaka, Martín. 2005. *Democracia sin partidos: Perú, 2000-2005: Los Problemas de Representación y las Propuestas de Reforma*. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos.
- Taylor-Robinson, Michelle M. 2001. "Old Parties and New Democracies: Do They Bring out the Best in One Another?" *Party Politics* 7(5): 594.
- Toledo, Alejandro. 2015. *The Shared Society: A Vision for the Global Future of Latin America*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Valenzuela, Arturo. 1993. "Latin America: Presidentialism in Crisis." *Journal of Democracy* 4(4):7-9.
- Van de Walle, Nicholas. 2006. "Tipping Games: When Do Opposition Parties Coalesce?" In *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition*, ed. Andreas Schedler, 77-94. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Zechmeister, Elizabeth J., and Margarita Corral. 2013. "Individual and Context Constraints on Ideological Labels in Latin America." *Comparative Political Studies* 46(6): 675-701.

---

<sup>1</sup>Following conventional scholarly definition, "Latin America" includes the countries that were colonized by Spain and Portugal.

<sup>2</sup>Alejandro Moreno, "Avizoran cambios en el sistema electoral," *Reforma*, April 14, 2007, p. 6. The 2007 survey was in Mexico's Chamber of Deputies. "Don't know" and other responses were omitted from the calculation.

<sup>3</sup>See "Propone Fox Segunda Vuelta," *Reforma*, June 30, 2006, 15 and Rodríguez (2009). The former presidential candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador criticized the rule at the "Private Breakfast with Andrés Manuel López Obrador," Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, October 11, 2011.

<sup>4</sup>On the PRI's view, see "Mexico's presidential election: Fresh Face, same old party," *The Economist*, June 23, 2012, p. 41.

<sup>5</sup> These surveys were by Parametría and were realized in June 2017/December 2009; they were accessed on the Parametría website by Kevin J. Middlebrook on February 23, 2010 and July 27, 2017 and kindly forwarded to the author.

<sup>6</sup> Denise Dresser, presentation at the conference “Whither Mexican Democracy?” at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, September 15, 2006, in Washington D.C.

<sup>7</sup> Author’s interview with Fabrice Lehoucq (Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas, CIDE), June 26, 2006 in Mexico City.

<sup>8</sup> For 1978-2006, data are drawn from Payne, Zovatto, and Mateo Díaz (2007: Appendix 3); for 2007-2011, from the Nils-Christian Bormann and Matt Golder dataset available [www.v-dem.net](http://www.v-dem.net); and for 2011-2016 from Election Resources at [www.electionresources.org](http://www.electionresources.org).

<sup>9</sup> Author’s interview, Professor Luis Salamanca, Universidad Central de Venezuela, in Caracas, December 5, 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in “Mexican leader praised abroad, booed at home,” *The Washington Post*, April 14, 2014, p. A8.

<sup>11</sup> During the campaign, many PRD voters did decide to vote for Fox or Labastida; approximately 40% of PRD voters defected, with 22% voting for Fox and 14% voting for Labastida (Magaloni and Poiré, 2004: 279).

<sup>12</sup> Cited by Julia Preston, “Mexico’s Influential Long Shot,” *The New York Times*, June 17, 2000, p. A4.

<sup>13</sup> Sam Dillon, “Mexican Party Reported to Quash Polls Predicting Its Defeat,” *The New York Times*, July 17, 2000, p. A9. Also, on the PRI’s continuing power over media, see LAWR, May 2, 2000, p. 199.

<sup>14</sup> Comments by Senator Adolfo Aguilar Zinser at a “Luncheon Discussion,” hosted by the Brookings Institution and the Inter-American Dialogue, July 19, 2000, at the Brookings Institution, Washington D.C. See also Magaloni and Poiré (2004: 281).

<sup>15</sup> For a discussion of definitions and thresholds for a “new party,” see McClintock (2018:259).

<sup>16</sup> Author’s interview, Ambassador Guillermo Gonzáles, Tegucigalpa, October 29, 2013.

<sup>17</sup> “Segunda vuelta en Bogotá?” *Semana*, April 9, 2017, p. 36.

<sup>18</sup> Author’s interviews with Alejandro Poiré (Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México, ITAM), in Cambridge, Massachusetts, November 11, 2006; and Eric Magar (Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México, ITAM), in Mexico City, June 30, 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Author’s interviews with Rafael Aranda (Avantel), in Mexico City, July 4, 2006, and Ilán Bizberg (El Colegio de México), in Mexico City, June 29, 2006.

<sup>20</sup> Author’s interviews with Benito Nacif (Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas, CIDE), June 29, 2006 in Mexico City and Alejandro Moreno (Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México, ITAM, and political analyst for the newspaper *Reforma*) in Mexico City, June 28, 2006.

<sup>21</sup> As Mossige (2013: 64) indicates, the PRD itself bore some responsibility for its exclusion from the IFE.

<sup>22</sup> Also, author’s interview, Kevin J. Middlebrook (University of London), in Toronto, Canada, October 10, 2010, and comments by John Bailey (Georgetown University) at the conference “Security, Drugs, and Democracy in Latin America,” at the George Washington University, February 28, 2011, and “Mexico’s Presidential Election: Fresh face, same old party,” *The Economist*, June 23, 2012, p. 39.

---

<sup>23</sup>Max Fisher and Amanda Taub,” Mexico’s Record Violence Is a Crisis 20 Years in the Making,” *The New York Times*, October 29, 2017, p. 16.

<sup>24</sup>Kathleen Bruhn, comments at the Comparative Politics Seminar of the Department of Political Science, George Washington University, Washington D.C., February 11, 2011.

<sup>25</sup>Author’s interview, Senator Jaime Gazmuri of the Socialist Party, October 18, 2006, in Valparaíso. Similar statements were made also in author’s interviews with former Senator Edgardo Boeninger of the Christian Democratic Party in Santiago, October 16, 2006 and by Juan Ignacio García (Director, Servicio Electoral de Chile) in Santiago, October 13, 2006.

<sup>26</sup>On PELA’s 10-point scale, I classified 1.0 through 3.20 as “extreme left,” 3.21 through 4.99 as “moderate left,” and 8.00 through 10.00 as “extreme right”—slightly modifying PELA’s classification. See McClintock (2018: 45-48).

<sup>27</sup>See also “Mexico’s presidential election: The man to beat,” *The Economist*, March 31, 2012, p. 45.

<sup>28</sup>Quoted in Anne-Marie O’Connor, “Mexican Voters Dismiss the new Lopez Obrador,” *The Washington Post*, May 27, 2012, p. A16.

<sup>29</sup>Quoted in Anne-Marie O’Connor, “Mexican Voters Dismiss the new Lopez Obrador,” *The Washington Post*, May 27, 2012, p. A16.