

**MEXICO'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS
AND THE WEIGHT OF THE
INTERNATIONAL VOTE**

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Political Science with Distinction

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to examine the power of the international absentee vote in the Mexican presidential elections through examination of trends and contrasts, since its inception in 2006. It also looks at the steps that the Institución Federal Electoral (IFE) and the Instituto Nacional Electoral (INE) have taken to encourage voter participation. There is a brief overview of the history of Mexico and the current three most popular political parties, background on how the IFE and INE operate and the voter regulations, and, finally, analysis of the past three presidential elections (2006, 2012, and 2018). Each election looks at three populations: domestic, international, and the overall total votes for each party, allowing for comparisons between the domestic and international vote. Research shows that there is still a great portion of the international population that has remained absent in the election process, in addition to this, the INE still has many regulations in place for submitting absentee ballots that oftentimes deter potential voters. Surveys show that expatriate Mexican citizens still consider the elections important to them, so it is imperative that the Mexican government push for the INE to create a reform that will not only lessen the burden of voting but also help create a larger presence worldwide for all Mexican citizens to become aware of their right to vote and instructions on how to do so.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

I took on this thesis having almost no background knowledge on Mexican presidential elections. All I wanted to study was the relationship between Mexican domestic voters and Mexican voters that live in the United States, and, to some extent, I stayed true to my initial idea. After my initial research, I uncovered a world of information I had never even heard about. I would never have imagined that, up until 2006, Mexico did not allow an international absentee vote in their elections, something so taken for granted by any American-born citizen.

While looking into the past elections and the impact of the international vote, I realized that there still isn't enough information on the topic, since it is still relatively new and ongoing changes are still happening. Not only that, but the information that does exist typically only addresses one election at a time or only analyzes the international vote from Mexicans living in the U.S.

Suffrage should not depend on your current location of residency. If a citizen of a country is granted the right to vote in their country's elections, they should be able to exercise that right from all around the world. In 2019, there should not be problems of postage, worries about voter fraud, or a lack of information on available resources. Each person should be able to easily find any information needed on their voting rights and any necessary documents. It is vitally important that we be encouraging

each person to make their voice heard, instead of setting them up with multiple roadblocks along the way.

It is with full recognition that I say that, although the Mexican government has many major issues they must attend to, especially issues pertaining to the safety of its citizens, the right to vote internationally should not lose priority. If you're not granting each person from your country an equal chance to vote, can you still call yourselves a representative democracy?

Chapter 2

METHODOLOGY

Initial Goals and Challenges

This research takes a look at the history of the political parties, elections, and voter laws in Mexico. In addition, it examines quantitative data that is drawn from the presidential election outcomes from 2006, 2012, and 2018, looking for any patterns and contrasts between the Mexicans living in Mexico and those that live abroad.

When I began informing myself on the election process, I stumbled upon the Instituto Nacional Electoral (National Electoral Institute or INE) – the non-governmental organization that conducts all major federal elections in Mexico. On their website, one of the things they offer is the data from past elections.¹ There is a tab that is labeled “Transparencia” (Transparency), where you can submit a formal request for any additional information that they are legally able to distribute, which they claim is practically everything that doesn’t breach the voter’s confidentiality.² Originally, I planned on examining Mexican voters in the United States specifically,

¹ Website for the Instituto Nacional Electoral, <https://www.ine.mx>

² Note to the reader that the majority of the information on the INE website is in Spanish.

seeing if there was any relationship between how Mexican people from each American state voted in the Mexican presidential election compared to the general ideology, and voting patterns, of the American citizens in the same states.³ I filled out the form but never received a confirmation of the request and even had to call the office multiple times to ensure that I was filing my request properly. The form and employees said the response typically takes six to eight weeks. At this point, in June, I had the time to wait and see.

During the summer I interned at the Mexican Consulate in Philadelphia, PA. While I was working in the office, I was hearing about the Presidential election going on in July and explained my possible thesis project to the Consul of Promotion and Press. Luckily, I was put in direct contact with an INE employee and that individual was more than helpful during the remainder of the entire process. All of our communication was done over email, in Spanish. I quickly learned that part of the information that I requested would not be available since they do not have data on how the Mexican residents of each U.S. state vote, and, when I kept asking to get more specific data on the U.S. voters, my request was never fulfilled.

I faced a lot of difficulty trying to find the final results from past elections that were conducted by the Instituto Federal Electoral (Federal Electoral Institute or IFE), the predecessor of the more recently established INE. Some of the IFE and its

³ To elaborate, looking at how Mexicans living in Texas voted in the Mexican presidential election where Texas is typically a conservative voting state in the American presidential elections.

successor, the INE, have posted results that contradict themselves. There was no way for me personally to know which to rely on for my research. This is when I used my contact at the INE to request the information I needed. They were able to give me the data for the 2006 and 2012 votes. I searched the INE database online for their 2018 election results and, since it was so recent (this past July), it was easier to access in comparison to the previous elections. I would also like to mention that all quantitative data was found in Spanish and translated by myself, a native Spanish speaker, or by searching the English names for the coalitions on Google.

Quantitative Analysis of International and Domestic Voting

Here is when I shifted my research to examine the international vote and domestic vote as a whole, comparing and contrasting each party's and candidate's outcome. I broke it down into three sections: the domestic results, the international results, and the total final results. I chose to only look at the top three candidates but wanted to make sure my percentages were still accurate, so I grouped all other candidates, null votes, and written-in votes into the category of "other." Originally, I made three different charts: domestic vote, international vote, total vote. After receiving the data from the INE and after speaking to my third reader committee, I decided that it would be easier to compare results if they were all on the same chart.

In addition, I first created pie-chart graphs of said data. Again, I made three different pie-charts, one for each voter population. After receiving feedback, I also

made the decision to have all the percentages on one graph; this is why I chose a clustered bar graph. Instead of choosing to use the number of votes for each candidate as my x-axis, I went with percentages. Since the total number of people that vote domestically is so drastically greater than the number that vote abroad, I saw the overall percent of each voter population a better comparison. I created all my charts and graphs in Microsoft Excel.

Collection of Qualitative Data

For my qualitative information, I began by reading news articles and brushing up on general history websites online. I also lightly relied on my own background knowledge from my Latin American studies courses and Mexican heritage. Once I pulled important historical information, I looked at Google Scholar for academic articles that either gave me more information on a topic or new information; I would look at the article's references and build on findings. I tended to lean towards more of a deductive approach. Specifically, I found Pew Hispanic Research Center, Mexican newspapers, and eBooks on each political party to be of the most help. Since my research topic is fairly new and still being actively analyzed, there were some challenges finding reading material that spoke about the evolution of the international absentee vote.

In regards to citations, I am following the Chicago Manual of Style as a reference for my footnotes and bibliography.⁴ I chose to add in shortened notes throughout my paper so that it is easier to access links and read more about certain topics as you go along if the reader wishes, especially if they are just looking at a certain chapter of the thesis. While reading all of the literature I analyzed, I kept a Microsoft Excel sheet to keep track of the topic covered in the reading or topic I was using it for, the source, date published, and any information I saw important. As I added it into my writing, I changed the font color to red so that, when finished, I would have an accurate list of sources used for my bibliography.

⁴ For more information on the Chicago Manual Style, visit <https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/>

Chapter 3

HISTORY OF MEXICO

Establishing Independence

On September 16, 1810, Mexico fought the first battle against Spain in the Mexican War of Independence, almost 300 years after the Spanish Monarchy originally conquered not only the territory, but also those living on the land. After 10 years of war and with the new liberal government in Spain, reforms promising Mexico independence began to finally seem realistic. The Spanish government and, more specifically, the leader of the Royalists, Agustín de Iturbide, drafted the Plan of Iguala. This proposition would deem Mexico an independent constitutional monarchy, where the Catholic Church would still maintain its high status. The other main takeaway from this plan was that it created a caste system, ranking Mexicans of Spanish descent above Mexicans from mixed or indigenous backgrounds, giving these lower-status citizens fewer rights.

There were still Royalists opposed to granting Mexico independence, but, to Mexico's advantage, the new Spanish viceroy at the time did not have the means to fight against the Mexican troops. The Treaty of Córdoba was signed on August 24, 1821, finally putting an end to the war and granting Mexico their independence.

Iturbide briefly ruled over the newly established country until he was deposed in 1823 and a republic government was created, naming Guadalupe Victoria the first president.

Although the Mexican War of Independence lasted just over 11 years, to this day, Mexico chooses to celebrate their independence on the day it all began. Every September 16th, the country comes together in celebrating not only their victory over Spain, but also their strong patriotism, vibrant culture, and complex history.

Constitutions

In order to examine elections and people's participation in exercising their right to vote, one must also learn about the path taken to get Mexico to its present voting population. For the purposes of this paper, I am more specifically looking to analyze the evolution of citizenship laws and the right of suffrage.

1824

While Mexico has undertaken several constitutions and revisions, the three that are of greatest importance are the constitutions of 1824, 1857, and 1917. Beginning on October 4, 1824, this new doctrine, referred to as the La Constitución Federal de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos (the Federal Constitution of the United Mexican States), was put into action after the downfall of Iturbide's rule. It gave the country its name of the United Mexican States, labeled them a representative federal republic, and declared their official religion to be Catholicism. With the fear of overdeveloping

another head of state, the constitution distributed many powers to the states. The major drawback of this founding constitution is that it did not address how they would define citizenship, nor did it state who would be granted suffrage; these crucial decisions would be left up to each state. While some states kept their citizenship requirements very general, others required people to own property in order to obtain citizenship. One other important takeaway is that this document granted the president a four-year term and reelection was permitted.⁵

1857

33 years later, a new constitution was ratified and called La Constitución Federal de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos de 1857 (the Federal Constitution of the United Mexican States of 1857). After the dictatorship of Antonio López de Santa Anna ended, the newly appointed liberal government wished to reinstate the Constitution of 1824, which the previous government had strayed away from — adding some modifications.⁶ To highlight some of the changes, the Constitution of 1857 dismissed titles of nobility, defined what it is to have Mexican nationality and

⁵ For the full digital copy of the la Constitución Federal de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos de 1824 see: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbc0001.2011gen31218/?sp=3>

⁶ In 1835, Santa Anna replaced the Constitution of 1824 with his own constitution called, “Siete Leyes” (“The Seven Laws”). It centralized power to the federal government, creating a unitary republic.

citizenship⁷, and reinstated the division of powers between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches.

1917

In the town of Santiago de Querétaro, the new Constitution of 1917 was approved and put in motion during the Mexican Revolution. The main takeaways from this version are the limitations it placed on the Catholic Church and the emphasis it shifted to the labor sector and the government's new support through maternity leave, establishing 8-hour work days, the right to strike, and granting relief from any abuse in the workplace. While some reforms were created under the Salinas de Gortari Administration, La Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos (the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States) is still the current, active constitution of Mexico. What should also be noted is that, in 1928, the presidential term was officially changed to six years without reelection and has stayed the same since.

Evolution of the Vote

⁷ Section II of the Constitution states that a citizen is: a person born in Mexico, born elsewhere to Mexican parents, those who apply for citizenship according to the country's laws, and those who give birth to children in Mexico.

The voting population has vastly increased throughout Mexico's voting history, beginning in 1917, during the Mexican Revolution, when all men were granted suffrage, and continuing to 1953, when women were granted suffrage on October 17, 1953, recognizing women with full citizenship after multiple failed attempts. Finally, in 1996, the country recognized Mexicans living outside of the country as eligible voters, with the restriction that they return to Mexico to cast their vote.

Currently, you must be 18 years old to register to get a credencial electoral (electoral credential) that functions as an official form of ID. In order to obtain said ID, you must show a birth certificate that shows that you are at least 18 years old, a valid photo ID (passport, drivers license, etc.), and proof of residence.

Today, the voter demographics in Mexico show approximately a 72% participation rate. Of these 90 million people, the most active age group are people of ages 35-49 who make up a little over 29% of the voters and the lowest performance coming from people over 65 years old (approximately 11%). Females have a slightly higher turnout (52%) compared to males (48%).⁸

⁸ Ramírez, "Mexico's Voter Demographics."

Chapter 4

TODAY IN MEXICO

Current Election Process

Every six years, Mexico votes on their new president. As a brief overview, Mexico uses a plurality voting system, which is different from the U.S.'s majority system. The difference is that a majority percentage of 51% of the national vote is not required for a Mexican candidate to be elected; instead, the person with the highest percentage is the winner of the election. As you can imagine, this can cause a great deal of political tension for several reasons. The vote could be so split that the winner only has a small fraction of the overall vote, like in the 2012 election. Enrique Peña Nieto won with only 38.2% of the vote with his top competitors at 31.6% and 25.4%.⁹ On the other hand, this system makes it possible for two candidates to be neck-and-neck in the final results, as seen in 2006 between Felipe Calderón Hinojosa (35.9%) and Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador (35.3%), where the winner only had a difference of .6% of the overall vote.¹⁰ This means that almost as many people voted and hoped that the the runner-up would win, causing a divide within the country.

⁹ Instituto Federal Electoral, “Estadística de la Elecciones Federales 2011-2012”

¹⁰ Instituto Federal Electoral, “Elección de Presidente de Mexico”

Popular among the political parties is the idea of forming coalitions or alliances with each other. Each coalition is then, overall represented by a popular candidate or multiple. After this, the parties involved agree on the number of public offices each party will be entitled too, if the coalition wins. This also gives each candidate more access to extra funds and extra campaign time, since the principle of proportional representation states that, “federal offices up for election will be assigned based on the percentage of votes obtained by a political party within a region.”¹¹ In more general terms, if one were to vote for their candidate of choice, believing that they belonged to a certain party, their vote may also be benefitting other parties with whom they have formed a coalition, and, in some cases, the winning candidate may lean more towards another party in the coalition.¹²

Voter ID Cards and Absentee Voting

While this paper will analyze the evolution of the international vote in more depth in the upcoming chapters, it is important to know the fundamentals before looking at the voter turnout data. During the time of the election of 1988, there had been a lot of talk about voter fraud, but, in 2004, the idea of election-rigging was confirmed in an autobiography by President Miguel de la Madrid (PRI), who held office from 1982 to 1988. In his book, he discussed how, in 1988, when electing his

¹¹ Mendoza, “Of coalitions and alliances.”

¹² For more information about coalitions in the Mexican Elections, specifically in the most recent 2018 election, visit <https://www.ine.mx/actores-politicos/convenios-de-coalicion/>

successor, initial results from around the capital showed that Carlos Salinas de Gortari (PRI) was losing to the opposition. De la Madrid became worried that the rest of the country was voting similarly and that the PRI's time in power would finally come to an end. On election night, they – de la Madrid and his advisors – decided to state that the computer system calculating the votes had crashed and without an official vote count, declared PRI and Salinas the winner against Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas from the Frente Democrático Nacional (National Democratic Front) party. Three years after the election, the PRI and the PAN joined together with the Mexican Congress to order that the ballots of the election of 1988 be burned, destroying any hard evidence of the fraud.¹³ After all the allegations and general distrust in the government, Mexico knew it had to make a change.

In 1990, legislation made it possible for a publicly funded organization to emerge and it was named el IFE. This organization would be in charge of conducting the federal elections for the President, the Chamber of Deputies, and the Senate in Mexico. Since its start, there have been three major reforms that have altered the organization's powers. In 1993, the government allowed the IFE to validate elections and set spending limits on campaigns. Following this, in 1994, there was more weight placed on independent citizen members' votes versus partisan representatives. Lastly, the most dramatic change was in 1996, when the organization severed itself from the executive branch completely, increasing its autonomy and making itself independent.

¹³ Thompson, "Rigged 1988 Election."

In 2014, under the Peña Nieto administration, the IFE was dissolved and replaced by what stands now, the INE, which is considered a non-governmental organization.

Other than the already-mentioned responsibilities, these organizations did – and still continue to, through the INE – supply voting support to the citizens of Mexico. They issue the voter identification cards that are necessary for every election and can be used as an official ID, they monitor elections to ensure homogenous standards, strive to improve civic culture, offer transparency with statistics and votes, and work to encourage voter turnout and participation.

Prior to the 2006 presidential election, in order to vote as a Mexican citizen, you had to be not only registered under the IFE, but you had to vote in Mexico. Before 2006, the IFE was worried about regulating votes internationally and did not have enough confidence in being able to guarantee the same quality of security through absentee ballots as they did with domestic ballots.¹⁴ Finally, in 2006 they compromised and the IFE allowed people to vote internationally, but they already had to be registered with a voter ID; you could not register outside of Mexico. This remained the same in the following election in 2012 and didn't change until recently in the July 2018 election. The most recent election allowed Mexican citizens to register to vote and obtain voter IDs at their local Consulate or Embassy.¹⁵

¹⁴ Suro and Escobar, “Absentee Voting in Mexican Elections,” 16.

¹⁵ For more information about the INE's responsibilities, visit <https://www.ine.mx/que-hace-el-ine/>

Political Parties and Ideologies

Partido Revolucionario Institucional

Currently, there are three major parties that dominate in the polls time and time again. The first was founded in 1929 and, after going through multiple name changes, eventually became el Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party or PRI). Overall, it is typically considered a center-right party, leaning more in favor of the Catholic Church and a free market economy.

The PRI is most famous for their 71 uninterrupted years in office from 1929-2000. One of the main reasons people believe that the PRI stayed in power for so long was because of the practice known as *el dedazo* (the big finger). This meant that each president would essentially select their own successor. The decision would be kept secret from everyone until *el destape* (the unveiling).¹⁶

Founded by Plutarco Elías Calles, the party came out at the end of the Mexican Revolution and aimed to redirect power from the military to the states and those who represented the working/peasant class, but, after years in power, the party couldn't stay ahead forever. In 1988, for the first time in 59 years, they lost seats in the Senate – 4 of the 64. Although they won the presidential election that year with Carlos Salinas de Gortari, it was by such a small margin that many spoke of the possibility that there had been voter fraud. Little by little, the country began to stray away from

¹⁶ Werner, *Encyclopedia of Mexico*, 1059.

their long-lived PRI loyalty, having multiple states electing non-PRI candidates. While still in office, Salinas used his time to liberalize the economy and legally recognized the Catholic Church for the first time since 1917. What the party had to deal with next was something they could not plan for – during the campaigning of the man whom Salinas had chosen to be his successor, Luis Donaldo Colosio Murrieta, he was killed, causing the party to put Ernesto Zedillo at the forefront of the party. Setting a pattern, this election also showed a record low margin win. Possibly in the spirit of his reforms to uphold freer elections, Zedillo chose not to name a successor. Unfortunately for the party, that was also the election that ended their reign, and they lost to Vicente Fox from the opposing party, el Partido Acción Nacional (National Action Party or PAN).¹⁷ Some say that the party had been able to stay in power for so long as a result of their participation in clientelism and negative attitudes about politics and civic participation that helped the party's support continue through decades. Gradually, through the rise of new media outlets, Mexico's political ideology began to shift. The once popular, more traditional news companies began to have competition from new stations like TV Azteca and new paper outlets like *Frontera*, causing the party to lose some of their momentum by finally giving the population multiple perspectives to politics.¹⁸ The last time the PRI was in office was under President

¹⁷ Britannica, "Institutional Revolutionary Party."

¹⁸ Shirk, "The PAN and Democratic Change," 39-41.

Enrique Peña Nieto from 2012-2018. He was the first PRI president since the end of the 71 year ruling era ended in 2000.¹⁹

Partido Acción Nacional

Ten years after the PRI was created came PAN. Members of this party refer to themselves as Panistas. Founded by lawyer and economist Manuel Gómez Morín in 1939, this party is viewed as upholding “right-wing conservatism” views, focusing on the preservation of private property, low taxation, reduced government intervention, and the protection of practices, beliefs, and institutions that are often-times associates with elites.²⁰ On most controversial issues, PAN seems to fall to the right time and time again. In 2006, a legislator from the PAN party was one of only two votes that voted against the same-sex-unions law that passed in the Federal District.²¹ The party also fought against the abortion bill in 2007 that made abortion legal and anonymous, claiming that the bill was unconstitutional, although the Human Rights Commission of the Federal District sided against them.²²

¹⁹ For the PRI’s most recent platform in the 2018 election, visit <http://pri.org.mx/descargas/2014/12/PlataformaCoalicion.pdf>

²⁰ Shirk, “The PAN and Democratic Change,” 57-58.

²¹ Cuenca, “Ley de Sociedades de Convivencia.”

²² NOTIMEX, “acción de inconstitucionalidad contra aborto.”

Although the party had a slow start competing against the powerful PRI, eventually people began shying away from the PRI and what seemed to be a never-ending line of succession. After several failed attempts at getting candidates elected, the party's reputation began to turn around. In 1946, four successful PAN legislative candidates from Monterrey, Aguascalientes, Michoacán and the Distrito Federal (Federal District or D.F.) motivated the party to continue pushing their candidates to win national elections.²³ After a few more small victories, the party was finally making a name for itself. In 1989, Ernesto Ruffo Appel (Baja California, PAN) was elected as the first non-PRI governor since the PRI's inception. Then, just two years later, PAN won their first federal senatorial seat. For the next several years, the party continued to win elections for multiple governorships throughout Mexico. In 2000, the party finally found its way into the presidency with candidate and elected President, Vicente Fox. Not only was he the first presidential victory for the PAN, but he was the first person to break the PRI's 71 years of ruling. He won with 42.71% of the vote following the party's alliance with el Partido Verde Ecologista de México (the Ecological Green Party of Mexico or PVEM), that they named Alianza por el cambio (Alliance for Change).²⁴ Although you would assume that the party would have a new-found momentum after the win, PAN still had to fight hard against the PRI in their upcoming elections for governorships and even lost several to the PRI. This,

²³ Shirk, "The PAN and Democratic Change," 62.

²⁴ IFE, "Elecciones 2000."

however, did not stop their 2006 presidential win with the son of a founding member of PAN, Felipe Calderón Hinojosa. With a winning margin of less than one-percent, to call it a close race is an understatement.²⁵ Unfortunately for the party, their back-to-back victories came to an end in the following presidential election, in which they lost against the famous PRI and Enrique Peña Nieto. The party's candidate in the most recent election of 2018 came in second, but still did not achieve the votes needed to win.²⁶

Partido de la Revolución Democrática

The last of the three is el Partido de la Revolución Democrática (The Party of the Democratic Revolution or PRD). The members of this party are known as Perredistas. This party's history is unique in the fact that, when it was created in 1986, it was done so by three PRI members – Rodolfo González Guevara, Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. Together, they first worked together in forming a political faction within the PRI, in an attempt to voice their opinions of the party's actions and to try to shift the PRI into to a more democratic party. However, their concerns would be repeatedly ignored until they decided to form a union. With the members of this newly founded union having a more left-wing ideology, when the PRI

²⁵ IFE, “Resultados Electorales Federales 1991-2012.”

²⁶ For more information about the PAN, visit <https://www.pan.org.mx>

supported Carlos Salinas de Gortari as the new candidate for the presidential campaign, the union could stand with the PRI no longer.²⁷

A year after leaving the PRI, Cárdenas ran as an independent in the presidential election. This ended up benefitting him, inasmuch as electoral law allowed multiple parties to select Cárdenas as their candidate, so, through extensive networking, he received votes from various party members. With, ultimately, votes from over 14 political parties, Cárdenas was still unable to secure the overall vote for president, but he did come closer than anyone had in the past to beating the PRI. Rumors of electoral fraud quickly circulated and it is said that it was possibly the final push the members needed to establish their new political party.²⁸ In 1989, the PRD was born as Mexico's only left-wing party. In 1994, Cárdenas ran for president again, this time, officially with the PRD. Again, he did not win. Following the election, he claimed that the winning party – PRI – had committed voter fraud. However, the party did not stand with him and focused their efforts on other projects.

Finally, in 1997, the party was able to secure their first governorship, winning in Mexico City with Cárdenas and they picked up some political standing through gaining seats in the Chamber of Deputies. Cárdenas ran for president once more in 2000, but came in third with just over 16% of the overall vote. Subsequently, in 2006 and 2012, the party chose to be represented by Andrés Manuel López Obrador –

²⁷ Bruhn, "Emergence of a New Left Party."

²⁸ Mossige, "Mexico's Left: Paradox of the PRD."

commonly referred to as AMLO. Again, in 2006, the PRD claimed voter fraud when AMLO lost the election by less than one percent. The IFE agreed to a recount of a portion of the votes, and when the majority supported the candidate who had won, Calderón (PAN), the federal government officially declared the presidency to the PAN. Demonstrations continued for weeks, demanding an official recount of all the votes. The government did not change their response and the party soon found itself at a crossroads: whether to continue pursuing this claim of fraud or to focus on other plans on their agenda. Split on how to proceed, they stood behind AMLO again in attempts to win the 2012 presidential election.²⁹ Once again, the opposition came out ahead, and he lost to the PRI and Peña Nieto. He later withdrew from the party and began his own (MORENA), winning the most recent election in 2018 making him the current President of Mexico.³⁰

²⁹ Mossige, “Mexico’s Left: Paradox of the PRD.”

³⁰ For more information about the PRD, visit <http://www.prd.org.mx> and https://web.archive.org/web/20170709030548/http://www.prd.org.mx/portal/documentos/basicos/DECLARACION_PRINCIPIOS.pdf

Chapter 5

THE ELECTION OF 2006

The general elections of 2006 were held on Sunday, July 2nd. In the previous election, in 2000, Mexico had finally chosen someone outside of the PRI party (Vicente Fox, from the PAN), ending their 71 years in power. This new 2006 winner would represent the nation and take over from President Fox. All around the country, citizens would venture out to cast their ballots, but this election was very different from the past. 2006 was the first year that the Instituto Federal Electoral (IFE), would open the election up to Mexican citizens all around the world, establishing the international absentee vote.

In previous years, when the IFE was asked about creating a voting option for Mexicans living abroad, the issue of voter fraud quickly arose. The issue with this outlook is that there are over ten million Mexicans living just in the United States alone.³¹ On top of that, it's been said that approximately 1 in 10 individuals who were born in Mexico lives outside of the country.³² This means that, if given the right to vote, Mexicans living abroad can have a significant impact on the outcome of national

³¹ Suro and Escobar, "Mexicans Living in the U.S.," 1.

³² Leal et al, "Transnational Absentee Voting," 541.

elections. While some might have doubts about whether or not people living outside of Mexico should be able to vote, several factors are important to debate. First, although there is a possibility that this international population may never live in Mexico again, many Mexicans live abroad temporarily. There are constantly people moving locations because of work assignments, who most likely will one-day return to their country. In addition, although these people are not currently living in Mexico, they are still being affected by Mexico's policies and economic choices. In 2006, a survey found that out of the eligible Mexican voters in the U.S., 65% said they sent money home (to Mexico) in the past year.³³ There is no easy measuring scale to help us decide whether or not someone living abroad is being affected enough by their birth country's government that they should be allowed to vote. What is clearly stated is that citizens of Mexico are given the right of suffrage.

In 2005, President Fox pushed for voter reforms in order to allow those living abroad the ability to vote. The initial bill would have made it possible for Mexican citizens to vote abroad via registered mail and for those who did not have a valid voter ID, to be able to obtain one at their local consulate or embassy. Soon this would be shut down due to the IFE's concerns about their ability to ensure the authenticity of said ballots and voter ID cards. The bill was amended and, eventually, a law was formed that allowed Mexicans all around the world to vote in Federal elections but they could not be issued a voter ID outside of Mexico. This news was both good and

³³ Suro and Escobar, "Mexicans Living in the U.S."

bad. It opened up an entirely new population of voters, but, at the same time, severely limited anyone that did not have a valid ID, making them travel back to Mexico in order to have the proper voting credentials. Even with a valid ID there were still too many factors against the eager voter deterring them from voting or from their vote being sent in properly. While 67% of Mexicans (in the U.S.) stated that they didn't register in the 2006 election because of the lack of necessary documents, a majority of 55% said they did not receive enough information on how to register for an absentee ballot.³⁴

IFE's decision to allow absentee ballots was a step in the right direction, but, unfortunately, what was to come was great disappointment. Cándido Morales, the Director of the Institute of Mexicans Abroad, a branch of the Foreign Ministry, said, "I believe that the interest is there; what's happening is that the information is not reaching them."³⁵ This opinion that the IFE was not doing enough to encourage voter turn out was shared by many. The newly instituted law said that applications for absentee ballots had to be received during a window from October 1, 2005 to January 15, 2006. Soon after the initial opening of the applications, complaints were made in November expressing people's concerns that the IFE was not doing enough to inform potential voters. At this point, only 733 applications from the U.S. had been received by November 7, 2005. In response, the IFE declared a week later that they would

³⁴ Suro and Escobar, "Mexicans Living in the U.S.," 3.

³⁵ La Opinion, "Falta de Promoción del Voto."

create a public information campaign, but it did not end up launching until mid-December, just a month before the deadline.³⁶ When the president of the IFE at the time, Luis Carlos Ugalde, spoke on the matter in a conference, he gave two reasons why Mexicans weren't applying for a ballot. One, that, on occasion, Mexicans do not want to register because they are unsure of their living location for the following year; and two, the IFE had observed that Mexicans who reside in other countries often shift their priorities to education and health services, possibly putting voter participation and politics on the back burner compared to other issues. When the president was faced with accusations that they were not doing enough to publicize the new law, he quickly rejected the idea, although up until then the organization was relying heavily just on consulates and embassies to inform the population.³⁷ On December 15th, when the public information campaign was launched in 15 states around the U.S., they began broadcasting information, printing advertising campaigns, setting up booths at airports and border crossing stations for those who would be returning back to Mexico for the holidays. Although all these extra steps were of good service, some can argue that they came a little too close to the January 15th deadline.

³⁶ Suro and Escobar, "Mexicans Living in the U.S.," 10.

³⁷ IFE, "Sala de Prensa Virtual."

Table 1 2006 Presidential Election Outcome

Sources: Data from IFE, 2006

	Felipe Calderón Hinojosa PAN	Andrés Manuel López Obrador PRD, Coalición por el Bien de Todos	Roberto Madrazo Pintado PRI, Alianza por México	Other³⁸
Domestic	14,981,268 (35.88%)	14,745,262 (35.31%)	9,300,081 (22.27%)	2,731,580 (6.54%)
International	19,016 (57.40%)	11,088 (33.47%)	1,360 (4.10%)	1,667 (5.03%)
Total	15,000,284 (35.89%)	14,756,350 (35.31%)	9,301,441 (22.26%)	2,733,247 (6.54%)

Eventually, July 2, 2006 came around and history had been made two elections in a row, when PAN candidate, Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, was elected. Less than 1% away, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (PRD) – also known as AMLO – came in second, and, finally, Roberto Madrazo Pintado followed in third with the PRI. The total outcome of foreign votes came out to 33,131, just .08% of the total votes received for the presidential election.

³⁸ Other category takes into account all the votes for other candidates that ran, write-in votes, and nulled votes, this was done in order to provide accuracy in percentages.

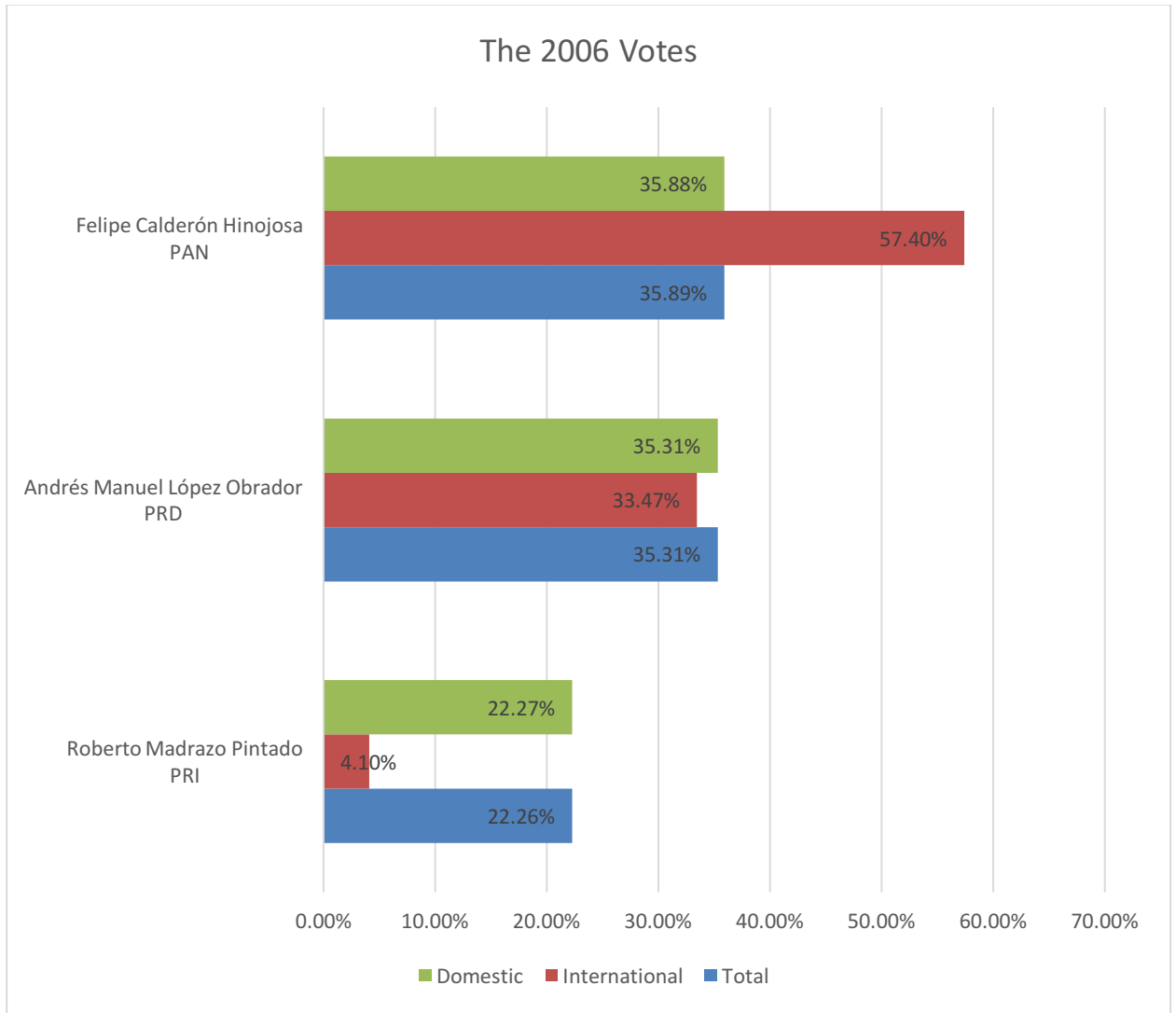


Figure 1 2006 Presidential Election Outcome

Although you can see in the graph that the international vote still stood behind Calderón as the newly elected president, it is important to note the large differences in percentages for Calderón and Madrazo between both populations. Internationally, Calderón actually won by a majority (57.4%) versus his plurality domestic win. On

the other hand, Madrazo experienced a very low amount of votes internationally in comparison to his 22.27% domestically. An interesting comparison is, at the time, the United States was dealing with a republican government under George W. Bush. As previously noted, the PAN tends to fall on the conservative side, an adjective commonly used to describe the U.S.'s Republican party. With a majority of the international vote coming from the United States, it is interesting to see that Americans and Mexicans were favoring similar ideologies during this time period.

Chapter 6

THE ELECTION OF 2012

2012 was a unique election, but primarily because of the results. Other than that, disappointingly enough, there had been no law reforms for the new elections since 2006. After a tremendously low international outcome, the IFE continued to rely on their own resources to encourage participation. They did not propose or encourage new legislation, but hoped that time, word of mouth, and the continuation of their advertisements through consulates and embassies would suffice. That being said, little is known about any programs the IFE pushed internationally for the 2012 elections. One can assume that, since this election did not bring much change to their new policies set in 2005, not as much documentation was published on the topic.

Within that setting, an election was held and the results are interestingly contrasting. To begin with, after two lost elections, the PRI found itself back in the executive branch under its candidate Enrique Peña Nieto (commonly referred to as just “Peña Nieto”), governor of the state of Mexico from 2005-2011. During his first speech as the winner of the election, he stated, “the Mexican people have given our party a second chance... We are going to honor that with results.”³⁹ Trailing in second was the last election’s runner-up and former mayor of the Federal District, AMLO. The following candidate, who received the third highest percentage of votes,

³⁹ Peña Nieto, “Mensaje íntegro de Peña Nieto.”

was Josefina Vázquez Mota, a second-term congresswoman and the first female presidential candidate to represent a major party in Mexico.

Table 2 2012 Presidential Election Outcome

Sources: Data from IFE, 2012

	Enrique Peña Nieto PRI, Compromiso con Mexico	Andrés Manuel López Obrador PRD, Movimiento Progresivo	Josefina Vázquez Mota PAN	Other⁴⁰
Domestic	19,152,215 (38.23%)	15,832,847 (31.60%)	12,715,462 (25.38%)	2,402,025 (4.79%)
International	6,377 (15.53%)	15,980 (38.91%)	17,168 (41.80%)	1,542 (3.75%)
Total	19,158,592 (38.21%)	15,848,827 (31.61%)	12,732,630 (25.39%)	2,403,567 (4.79%)

In this election, there were a total of 41,067 international votes cast. Although there was an increase of 7,936 votes between the two elections, the overall participation was much higher for the 2012 election, causing the international votes to only reflect .08% of the overall total vote for the second election in a row.

⁴⁰ Other category takes into account all the votes for other candidates that ran, write-in votes, and nulled votes, this was done in order to provide accuracy in percentages.

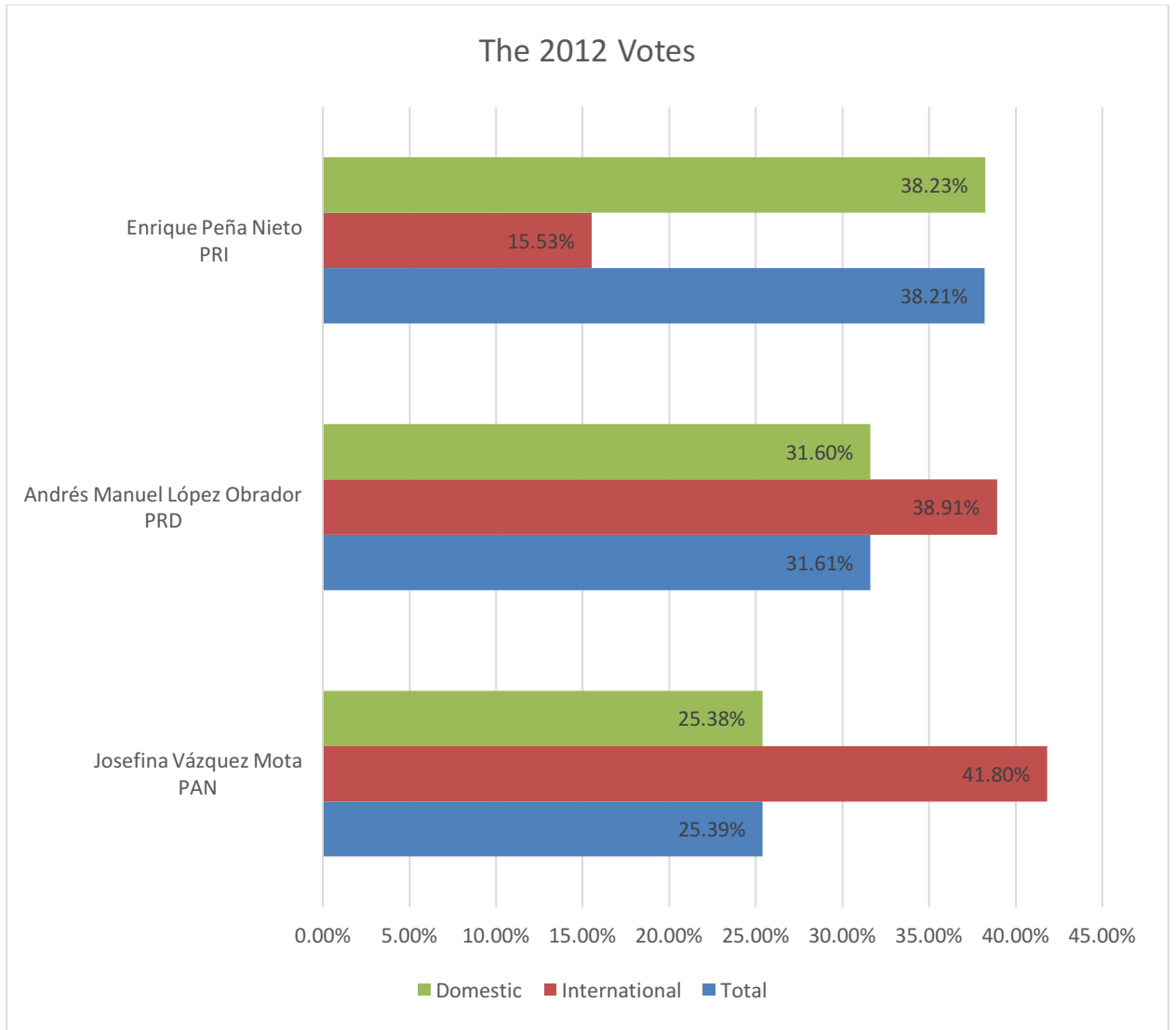


Figure 2 2012 Presidential Election Outcome

The big takeaway from this election is the fact that the international results were the opposite of the domestic vote. Based solely on the international vote, Vázquez would have been the first woman to be president of

Mexico, AMLO would have been the runner-up, and Peña Nieto in last place of the three.

While it is hard to assume what created this difference in support between the domestic and international population, it is important to remember the longstanding history the PRI has had of voter fraud accusations. Although Mexican residents might have had time to adjust to the PAN being in office and either put the accusations behind them or trusted the statements that the PRI is not the “old PRI,” those who are not constantly hearing about the election might have a different attitude towards it, especially people that have left the country during the end of the last PRI administration.

Unfortunately, what some people thought was a great victory for the PRI may have done more harm than good. During Peña Nieto’s presidency, La Reforma newspaper conducted several approval-rating surveys. He went into office with a 50% approval rating, which, for a country with as many political parties as Mexico, is a high percentage.⁴¹ In comparison, in August of 2016, the newspaper reported he had reached a low of 23%, with 74% of the population disappointed by his political decisions. This 23% was a record low for the newspaper since it began polling ratings in 1995.⁴²

Some openly known criticisms pertaining to Peña Nieto involve violence and corruption. One of the biggest historical events that took place during his administration was the abduction of 43 students in Guerrero in 2014.

⁴¹ La Reforma, 2012.

⁴² La Reforma, 2016.

Numerous sources and many activists claim that local police and drug cartels worked together in the kidnapping, due to the fact that most of the students had just protested against the government days before the incident. In addition to this theory, others believe that there were drugs hidden in the buses that the students were in, without the students knowing, thus putting them in a crossfire for drugs.⁴³ Other than that, Peña Nieto, along with many other previous Mexican presidents, has had allegations of fraud. During his presidency he built a multi-million-dollar home named la Casa Blanca (the White House) for his own personal use, something that an honest politician should not have been able to afford. Recently, since he has left the office, Joaquín Guzmán Lera – also known as the infamous crime lord, El Chapo – has accused Peña Nieto of a \$100 million bribe during his recent criminal trial. He states that when elected as president, Peña Nieto offered El Chapo safety in exchange for \$250 million, which El Chapo countered with only \$100 million.⁴⁴ While this last event does not reflect his approval rating while in office since the news did not come out until Jan 2019, it is still important information to take into account, because, where there is one crime, there most likely are many more.

⁴³ Hernandez, “A Massacre in Mexico.”

⁴⁴ Feuer, “Peña Nieto Took \$100 Million.”

Chapter 7

THE ELECTION OF 2018

The election results of 2018 were very consistent all around. What is important to focus on are the changes made to the international vote. Since the last election, the newly founded INE had decided to approve the voting reform that allows Mexican citizens to: register to vote, receive a voter ID card, or renew their voter ID card at their nearby consulate or embassy for the first time in Mexican history. Employees at embassies believed that this would be the first election where the international vote had the ability to sway the election results.⁴⁵

The top three candidates for this election were: José Antonio Meade Kuribreña (PRI), Ricardo Anaya Cortes (PAN), and Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador (MORENA). Unfortunately for former finance minister, Meade, the party's predecessor may have hurt their chance at presidency just through party affiliation, given Peña Nieto's low approval rating and the mass dissatisfaction with the PRI's actions to combat corruption and crime. Anaya had a bit more luck getting backing from the population, forming an unlikely coalition with PAN – a center-right party – and two smaller center-left parties. And for the third and final time running for president was AMLO, possibly the most unique candidate Mexico has seen in decades. He had formed his own party, el Movimiento Regeneración Nacional (the

⁴⁵ Black-León, Personal Communication.

National Regeneration Movement), commonly referred to as MORENA.⁴⁶ AMLO has been labeled a populist and Mexico’s most left-wing leader in 80 years.⁴⁷

The election was hard for Mexicans for gruesome reasons. With the continuation of extreme gang violence and their rise to power, there have been countless attempts to control local politics, resulting in the murder of 132 politicians since September 2017, 48 being candidates for office. On the other hand, Mexico reported that their young citizens mobilized like never before with 14 million voters under the age of 39 voting for the first time.⁴⁸

Table 3 2018 Presidential Election Outcome

Sources: Data from IFE, 2018

	Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador MORENA, Juntos Haremos Historia	Ricardo Anaya Cortes PAN, Por México al Frente	José Antonio Meade Kuribreña PRI, Todos por México	Other⁴⁹
Domestic	30,049,620 (53.17%)	12,583,776 (22.27%)	9,285,240 (16.43%)	4,593,921 (8.13%)
International	63,863 (64.86%)	26,344 (26.75%)	4,613 (4.68%)	3,650 (3.71%)
Total	30,113,483 (53.19%)	12,610,120 (22.28%)	9,289,853 (16.41%)	4,597,571 (8.12%)

⁴⁶ For more information on political party, MORENA; visit <https://morena.si>

⁴⁷ Nugent, “Mexico’s 2018 Elections.”

⁴⁸ Nugent, “Mexico’s 2018 Elections.”

⁴⁹ Other category takes into account all the votes for other candidates that ran, write-in votes, and nulled votes, this was done in order to provide accuracy in percentages.

This election was simple but interesting. AMLO not only won the presidency, but did so by obtaining the majority of the votes at 53.19% overall. Following was Anaya at 22.28%, and lastly was Meade at 16.41%. The international vote made for 98,470 votes overall, but only accounted for .17% of the total vote. Still, this percentage is just over two-times as big as the first two elections that allowed an international vote, showing there is much room for growth.

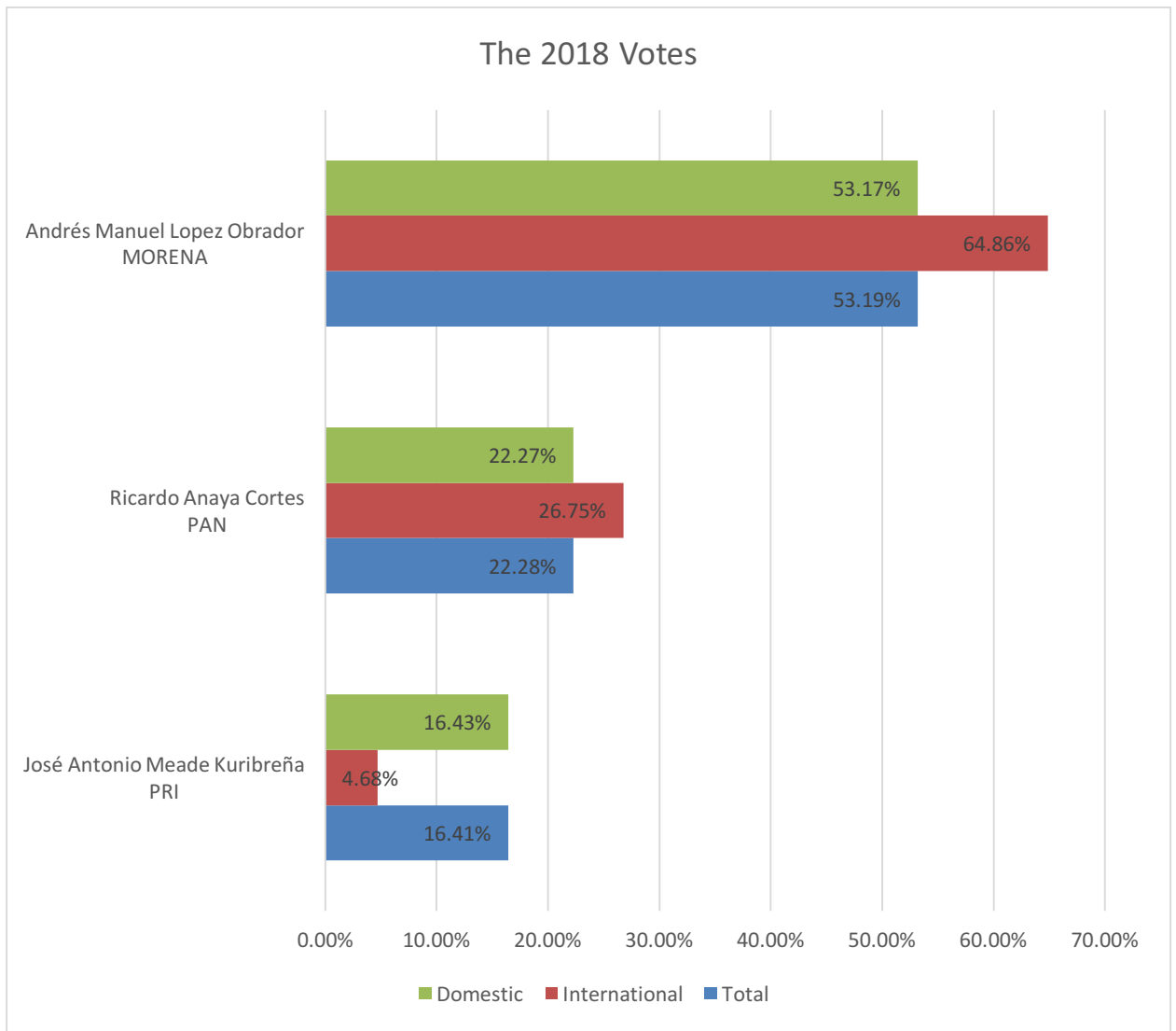


Figure 3 2018 Presidential Election Outcome

The only extreme differences we see here is between the domestic and international vote for the third candidate, Meade, and a roughly 11% difference between AMLO's votes domestically and internationally – although both still got him over the majority line. After two failed attempts, AMLO finally got his victory and

Mexico stood by him. This shows that the country still has negative feelings towards the PRI, especially those living abroad. After re-electing the PRI into office, the consensus was that it did not go well, voting overwhelmingly for an opposing party, MORENA.

AMLO has promised the country that he will alleviate the high 40% of the population that has found itself in poverty for decades, sworn to eliminate corruption, and promised to focus on reducing violence. Although some say that, while his agenda is ambitious, it also seems vague.⁵⁰ He plans on reducing government spending on official employees – including himself – and hopes to save money from recovered money lost to corruption.⁵¹ There is a tremendous amount of work to be done in Mexico, but, regardless of politics, all seem to agree that AMLO does not lack passion.

⁵⁰ Felbab-Brown, “New Era of Politics.”

⁵¹ Felbab-Brown, “New Era of Politics.”

Chapter 8

CONCLUSION

Although slightly modified since its inception in order to motivate participation, the downfalls from this international voting process still remain an overwhelming hindrance to many potential voters. Leaders of Mexican organizations in the U.S. have agreed that the requirements to apply for an absentee ballot are far too difficult. Mexicans hoping to vote would have to submit a copy of a lease or utility bill in their name as proof of residency, but with the living conditions of this population, many live in shared homes where each resident does not have their own bills. In addition to this first obstacle, mailing the application is a challenge of its own. In order for it to meet requirements, the voter must drop it off at the post office and pay roughly \$8 for the registered mail, in addition to postage. This requires the person to fill out a form with a name and address, a task that many Mexicans that currently live in the U.S. illegally avoid.⁵² All of these challenges add up to making for a very complicated voting experience, possibly deterring thousands or even millions from casting their vote.

Through the years, the IFE and the INE have reported significantly low voter registration numbers world-wide in the Mexican presidential elections. However, out of those who are registered, typically, the voter participation is high. In 2006, there

⁵² Suro and Escobar, “Absentee Voting in Mexican Elections”

were 40,876 international registered voters. With an total of 32,621 votes cast, that means that voter turnout internationally was at 79.80%. In 2012, registration went up to 59,115 but, unfortunately, turnout lowered to 68.87%. Lastly, in the most recent elections with the registration reform, a total of 98,470 people voted internationally. Unfortunately, the data on the turnout is not published by the INE. They did publish the overall turnout at 63.43%, which in comparison, is lower than the international turnout in 2006 and 2012. Assuming it followed the same pattern in the most recent election, the international population tends to exercise their right to vote more than domestic voters. This may be because of how time-consuming and detailed the registration process is for people living abroad; once they register, they feel more inclined to vote since they already went through the difficult registration process. What I would have liked to be able to compare are the number of eligible voters living around the world to the number of registered voters; however, with legal status issues, many statistics on the number of Mexicans living in other countries vary on almost any other source you look at.

All this being said, the lack of registered voters is not just an issue in Mexico. In 2014, only 93,000 ballots from overseas citizens were received in U.S. elections. Based on the U.S. Vote Foundation, the U.S. had only a 4% turnout of eligible voters in 2012 and 2014.⁵³ In addition, Argentina is currently experiencing problems with their international voting reforms. As of now, voting by mail is not allowed, and with a very limited number of consulates worldwide, traveling to the closest consulate would be hundreds of miles away for many Argentines. Their parliament recently

⁵³ Dzieduszycka-Suinat, “4% Turnout for Overseas Voters”

approved a new law, allowing absentee votes to be sent in through the mail, but the Peronist Party voted against the reform, causing a federal judge to issue an unconstitutionality appeal. In the last election, there were 362,820 people registered to vote, but the turnout was 2.9%. The United Kingdom allows voting by mail, unless you live in Northern Ireland. The registration process can be done online; again, those living in Northern Ireland cannot and must complete a paper application form. However, the UK does set restrictions on how long those living abroad are eligible to vote. Citizens only have the ability to vote in the UK elections during their first 15 years abroad and only if they were registered to vote in the UK within the last 15 years. The turnout in 2017 was a devastating 0.6%.⁵⁴

With 68% of Mexican citizens in the U.S. still considering the Mexican elections important to them, it should be Mexico's priority to properly inform its citizens and ease the current voting process.⁵⁵ With 77% of the international vote coming from Mexicans in the U.S., 5% from Canada, and 3% from Spain, it is important to allocate proper resources to said countries in order to inform the public of their rights and the rules. Also, while it is essential that the INE chooses to emphasize its presence in the top Mexican-populated countries, the organization must remember that a citizen living in Australia (.55% of the international vote) is just as important as a citizen in the United States. I do not expect the same attention in each country, but I

⁵⁴ Your Vote Matters, "*Overseas Voters*."

⁵⁵ Suro and Escobar, "Absentee Voting in Mexican Elections"

do hope they offer assistance and guidance in each country, even on the most basic level.⁵⁶⁵⁷

At this point in the process, it is still fairly early to accurately assess the international vote and the weight it carries in the elections. It is still evolving and correcting itself, as we have seen in two out of three elections. Mexico made strides in the 2006 election to reform the voter population and again in 2018 to expand it even further, easing some of the burdens associating with voting internationally. There are still ways to go in order for more Mexicans to be able to vote in the elections. For future direction of research, I would suggest analyzing what other countries' policies are for international voting and seeing which Mexico could possibly adapt. In addition, I would suggest surveying the Mexican international population, seeing where they typically fall on various political issues and on the scale of ideologies to use as a reference to the general population in Mexico.

Although some could say that the international vote does not have a real impact on the final results, to that I'd respond, "Not yet." The reality is, in Mexico's true multi-party political system, it is common to not win with a majority, causing every percent, or less than, to matter in the end. In 2006, Calderón won with less than 1% more than the runner-up, and while the international vote currently does not hold that much authority, it very well could in future elections. As we go forward, if the INE makes it more accessible, it is only natural to assume that participation will be greater and the potential impact of the international vote will continue to increase. It

⁵⁶ INE, "Mexicanos en el Extranjero"

⁵⁷ For more information on voter turnout in countries around the world, visit <http://www.votoextranjero.mx/web/vmre/elecciones2018>

is Mexico's responsibility, as well as its citizens', to inform and educate in order to not only increase turnout, but to ensure each vote is made in a knowledgeable capacity.

Mexico's government must build bridges to each country around the world, ensuring its citizens that, no matter where you currently find yourself living, your voice is heard and your rights remain strong.

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