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A NEW ARENA FOR PARTY POLITICS

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Abstract

As more countries extend voting rights to citizens residing abroad, diaspora communities play a growing role in home country politics. International party activity shows parties seek support from citizens residing abroad despite low turnout and often restrictive rules regarding overseas campaigning. However, party diaspora outreach efforts are not uniform. In Mexico, the historic opposition parties, PAN and PRD, have seen relatively greater levels of overall diaspora engagement, with a greater frequency and more community focus of diaspora visits, while the formerly hegemonic PRI has been virtually inactive. The case of Mexico illustrates how this variation is shaped by the partisan skew of the diaspora community, itself a product of historical legacies of migration and state policy, and in turn reinforcing policies that constrain party activity abroad. This chapter tests how attitudes and outreach activity to the diaspora vary among Mexico's three principal historic parties and offers a new theory on how partisan diaspora outreach varies across parties, in which two factors – a skewed diaspora electorate and a restrictive overseas electoral regime – reinforce one another, resulting in differing diaspora outreach activities and strategies across parties.

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Anti-party skew and variation in diaspora outreach by Mexican parties

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There are few countries which better illustrate the contradictions of diaspora campaigning than Mexico. For Mexico's 2000 elections, then candidate Vicente Fox visited Mexican immigrant neighbourhoods in Los Angeles and Chicago, where he rode a horse through the streets of South Lawndale, better known by its residents as La Villita. Notably, at the time of his visit, Mexican citizens living outside of Mexico did not have the right to vote: Fox had travelled to the US to campaign among a nonvoting electorate.

For the 2018 elections, the winning candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador of the *Movimiento Regeneración Nacional* (National Regeneration Movement – MORENA) visited eight US cities and fulminated against the Trump administration's anti-immigration policies and rhetoric, promising to provide lawyers to those facing deportation (Vergara 2017). By 2018, Mexicans living abroad had gained the right to vote; however, it was also declared illegal for candidates to campaign outside of Mexico. By making these visits before officially inaugurating their campaigns, López Obrador was complying with the letter of the law, but not the spirit. Notably, no presidential candidate of the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (Institutional Revolutionary Party – PRI), the once-hegemonic party that controlled the presidency for 70 years and won the 2012 election has ever campaigned abroad.

How do parties approach diaspora communities as an arena of electoral contestation? This chapter considers this question in terms of both structure in terms of party organizations in the diaspora, and function, in terms of voter outreach and mobilization by parties. Despite legal prohibitions on campaigning abroad and limited transnational voter turnout, Mexican parties invest in both (limited) infrastructure and voter mobilization abroad, with variation among parties. Using travel documents of Mexican party officials obtained through a public records request and interviews with party officials, this chapter finds that how parties campaign abroad – specifically in the United States – is largely a historical legacy of migration. Two aspects of this legacy have particular implications for parties' present-day outreach efforts: the infrastructure that parties built in the diaspora, and the historical partisan skew of the diaspora, both prior to diaspora enfranchisement. This paper will provide historical context for Mexican parties' outreach to Mexicans in the US, the country of residence of the vast bulk of Mexicans outside of Mexico, then analyze the structural and partisan factors which explain variation in Mexican party activity in the US. The subsequent section will draw on party travel records, news reports, and interviews with party officials to show how Mexican parties and candidates campaigned to different degrees in the US in response to these factors.

The Mexican diaspora: a sleeping giant

Mexicans represent the largest immigrant population in the United States, with a long and continuous history of migration that predates the existence of the present-day US–Mexico border. An estimated 11.5 million Mexicans reside outside of Mexico, roughly one in ten of all Mexicans, 98% of them in the United States, making the Mexican diaspora a large and potentially consequential electoral constituency in Mexico (Pew Hispanic Center 2009).

Yet party investment in the diaspora exists despite the fact that diaspora voter turnout is uniformly low: in all three presidential elections in which Mexicans could vote from abroad, less than 3% of an estimated 4.2 million potential voters abroad voted (Mexican Federal Election

Institute 2012). Prior to 2006, Mexicans residing outside of Mexico had no right to vote at all. Mexican media outlets routinely lambast the public expense of overseas absentee voting; a typical headline analyzing the diaspora vote in the 2012 presidential elections was 'Each vote from abroad cost close to 5,000 pesos' (US$375 at the time) (Vargas 2012).

In the first two presidential elections following diaspora enfranchisement, the Mexican diaspora electorate has voted with the *Partido Acción Nacional* (National Action Party – PAN) and was thus perceived to have an overall skew to the right. This is not, however, a question of ideological or partisan affinity but rather a legacy anti-party skew. The diaspora vote is largely a vote against the long-time incumbent PRI, one which the PAN has been better positioned to capitalize on as the most electorally viable PRI rival, compared to the *Partido de la Revolución Democrática* (Party of the Democratic Revolution – PRD). This anti-PRI skew was underscored by the 2018 election, in which the PRD allied with the PAN, and the diaspora vote swung decisively to López Obrador, the left populist MORENA candidate: one who captured the support of 64% of Mexican diaspora voters not out of partisan loyalty – the same diaspora electorate had rejected him during his candidacy in 2006 – but due to having become the most viable alternative to the PRI.

López Obrador's success in the diaspora points to the diaspora vote as an anti-PRI, rather than pro-PAN vote, as had previously been believed and reported in Mexican media. As this chapter will show, Mexican parties' respective diaspora campaign activities reflect the history of the diaspora's anti-PRI skew and the relative lack of infrastructure built by those parties in the US, both of which predate diaspora enfranchisement. These factors reinforce one another, as the diaspora's historical partisan skew informs parties', and thus states' policies towards diaspora enfranchisement and diaspora campaigning. The Mexican diaspora's historically strong anti-PRI skew, a legacy of 70 years of hegemonic one-party rule, creates a strong veto player which has severely restricted diaspora voter participation and diaspora campaigning by parties. The legacy of rule by a party disfavoured by the diaspora has also produced an underdeveloped infrastructure in the diaspora by all parties, which further limits party–diaspora engagement,

though with variation among the three major parties. Specifically, the PRI, the party with the least favourable legacy in the diaspora, engages in virtually no diaspora outreach, while other parties have engaged in greater levels of diaspora outreach, including campaign visits by presidential candidates and community meetings with other party officials, with the PAN and PRD's diaspora outreach now overshadowed by that of the upstart MORENA.

Transnationalism and democratization in Mexico

Parties are but one of many institutions of transnational political linkages for diaspora communities. Diaspora partisan activity has been presented as a phenomenon of 'globalization from below' by which migrants exercise agency free from, and sometimes in opposition to, sending states (Moctezuma 2004; Sassen 2006), while states can use the extension of voting rights as a means of reasserting state control over diasporas (Lieber 2010).

The case of Mexico is illustrative: Shain (1999) and Parra (2005) describe a state that has instrumentally kept its diaspora at arm's length for most of modern history, treating out-migration as a safety valve for both economic dislocation and political dissent. The interest of the long-ruling PRI in the period of one-party rule was to maintain an overwhelming show of hegemonic control (Magaloni 2006), which engaging a largely anti-PRI diaspora would undermine. Mexico's more recent shift towards more accommodating policies towards its diaspora citizens – through extending voting rights and mobilizing migrants in service of state interests – accompany both the political development of Mexico into a multi-party democracy and growing awareness of the diaspora's economic clout through remittances (Adida and Girod 2011; Germano 2013). As elections have become more competitive (and close, in the 2006 general election), and Mexicans abroad increasingly assertive of their rights as Mexican citizens, the Mexican diaspora has belatedly become an arena for contestation for Mexican parties which had previously invested little in that community.

Underdeveloped infrastructure

Ad hoc party organizations

In contrast to counterpart parties in other migrant-sending countries (Newland 2010; Paarlberg 2019), Mexican parties have lacked an institutionalized permanent presence in the diaspora. Their diaspora infrastructure is marked by their *ad hoc*, voluntarist nature and their secondary status in terms of clout within the diaspora community to non-party institutions, specifically hometown associations.

Structurally, all Mexican parties have lacked a model for an organized grassroots membership base in the diaspora. The PRD's partisan activity in the diaspora traces back the furthest, to the Cárdenas campaign in the 1988 election, during which he campaigned in Mexican communities in California and Chicago, at the invitation of local hometown associations and chambers of commerce (Puente 1998; Schütze 2016). *Ad hoc* groups of supporters formed in the diaspora for his visits, which later developed into informal organizations after Cárdenas returned to the US in 1989 to thank his supporters following the election. By the 1990s, the PRD amended its party statutes to allow migrants to be full party members. However, the party has lacked a strategy for diaspora membership growth, being largely (and belatedly) reactive to migrant initiatives. In the aftermath of the 1988 election, groups of PRD sympathizers had formed spontaneously in California, Illinois, Texas and New York, but were not granted official recognition by the party for over a decade (Sandoval Ramírez 2005). The PRD's national committee in the US was granted the same status as a party state committee in Mexico (Fox 2005). The PRD's internal organization responsible for diaspora outreach has historically been its Department of International Relations, an organization also tasked with maintaining relationships with fraternal parties in other countries, and thus treating the diaspora as a foreign party rather than as fellow citizens on equal terms with those at home. The PRD later organized a

Migrant Secretariat, an office which primarily liaises with US-based HomeTown Associations (diaspora civic organizations based on migrants' shared home regions – HTAs).

Similar organizations exist for the PRI, but they are mostly unofficial and unintegrated into the party organization. Two PRI support groups formed in the 1990s in Chicago: one, Friends of the PRI, was an initiative by the Mexican Consulate in Chicago designed as a temporary welcoming committee for a visiting PRI politician, and meant to be a counterbalance to similar welcoming committees that were formed in Chicago and California during Cárdenas's campaigning in 1988 (Schütze 2016). A second group was formed by reform-minded PRI supporters active in HTAs in Chicago, called Migrant Vanguard, who intended for it to be a vehicle for democratization of the party. Both groups competed for support in the Chicago diaspora, one with official party backing, but never intended to be a permanent organization, another with aspirations for permanence but facing hostility from the party establishment. In the end, both organizations persisted, but neither were granted official status or structurally integrated into the party. Currently migrants cannot be full party members, according to PRI official statutes (ibid).

The PAN, for its part, granted migrants voting rights for internal party elections in 2005 (Del Real 2005), but does not maintain any state committees in the US. Like its rivals, it has diaspora support committees which were *ad hoc* in origin, formed to welcome Vicente Fox when he campaigned in California and Chicago in 2000. The PAN tasks diaspora outreach to its Department of Organization Abroad, which thus at least nominally treats migrants as targets of domestic political organizing rather than of foreign relations.

MORENA, the newest of the parties, began in 2011 as a personalist current within the PRD centred around its former presidential candidate López Obrador at a time when he struggled with rivals for control over the PRD. It was founded as a formal party in 2014, while maintaining its personalist orientation around the figure of López Obrador and its primary function as a vehicle to elect him president. In its current form, it remains inchoate and weakly institutionalized, and its diaspora programme reflects this. The 2018 election saw the most

extensive use of diaspora campaigning by any candidate in history, but the nature of this campaigning was entirely driven by, and for the advancement of López Obrador and not the foundation of a robust permanent party network in the diaspora.

The impermanence of these party sympathizer groups – all formed mostly spontaneously to welcome visiting politicians, then becoming more permanent groups later granted some limited recognition and rights – or in the case of the PRI, none at all – by the party, underscores the fact that Mexican parties never made a conscious decision to invest in building a long-term membership base in the US (Fox 2005). This weak infrastructure, along with legal barriers produced by an anti-PRI skew, leads to relatively superficial outreach by Mexican parties to Mexicans in the US.

Table 3.1 Diaspora outreach by party

Party	Diaspora skew	Party infrastructure in diaspora	Diaspora outreach: intensity and type
PAN (right, historical opposition party)	Favourable	Underdeveloped	Moderate: unofficial campaign visits, little long-term presence
PRD (left, historical opposition party)	Neutral – to – favourable	Underdeveloped	Moderate: few unofficial campaign visits, little long-term presence
MORENA (left, new incumbent party)	Favourable	Underdeveloped	Moderate: *ad hoc*, extensive campaign visits in recent election but no long-term presence
PRI (centre, historical ruling party)	Unfavourable	Very underdeveloped, lacking official status	Extremely limited: no campaign visits, mostly elite level meetings

Source: Author's estimation of categorical variables.

Hometown associations

In place of more permanent and structurally integrated party membership organizations in the US, hometown associations (HTAs) serve as the principal vehicle for migrant transnational activity in the Mexican diaspora. Tracing back to the mid-20th century, what started as mutual aid societies assisting recent migrants grew with the post-1965 immigration boom to permanent, deeply institutionalized organizations in every city with a significant Mexican migrant presence. As of the late 2000s, there were over 800 hometown associations officially registered with Mexican consulates in the US, 80% of which were concentrated in Southern California and Northern Illinois (Escala-Rabadán, Bada, and Rivera-Salgado 2006), though estimates including nonregistered HTAs range up to 2,000, with collective total membership perhaps as high as 500,000 nationwide (Fox 2005).

Mexican parties seeking support in the US are largely subordinate to these much more well-established HTAs. One PRI official interviewed expressed frustration at the party's lack of control over hometown associations, saying: 'We have to go to them and ask them for favours. And they come to us with demands and tell us what to do. That's not how it works in Mexico.'[1] As in other countries, Mexican migrants frequently return home to run for office; however in contrast to El Salvador and the Dominican Republic, where diaspora party organizations groom candidates for office, for Mexican migrants, HTAs fill this role, with particular success in Michoacan electing migrant leaders to state office.[2] And as many HTA members share membership in other non-migrant civic organizations such as labour unions, HTAs also fill the role of building political linkages with the broader community which party base committees or sections take on in the Salvadoran or Dominican diasporas.

HTAs, nevertheless, are less-than-ideal proxies for parties in the promotion of transnational political engagement. They focus by design on local and not national issues, do not have institutional counterparts in Mexico, and often are informal and volunteer-run, limiting their mobilizational capacity. Additionally, their officially nonpartisan nature limits their usefulness for parties, though this varies by HTA. Factions within certain powerful HTAs have been openly partisan and caused rifts: in 2012 the *Federación de Clubes Zacatecanos del Sur de California*,

the largest of all Zacatecan HTAs in the US, split into two rival federations over one faction's support for the newly elected PRI governor of Zacatecas, Miguel Alonso Reyes. This followed a split of another Zacatecan HTA, in Fort Worth, Texas, the year prior, over the partisan affinities (Iskander 2015).

Nevertheless, parties do not control HTAs outright, though they certainly seek the favour among influential leaders within them and go so far as to buy votes within HTAs to ensure friendly leadership. HTAs may provide venues for hosting candidates, as they did for Cárdenas in 1998. However, to avoid the perception of favouritism, HTAs are more likely to sponsor multi-party events with invited candidates or officials from all parties, as in a 2010 Chicago forum hosted by the HTA-sponsored organization for migrant political rights, MIMEXPOL.

A restrictive diaspora voting regime

Among countries allowing diaspora voting, Mexico's diaspora electoral regime is famously restrictive (Smith 2008). Prior to 2016, citizens could not obtain credentials to vote outside of Mexico, so they would have to travel back to Mexico for a process that takes several weeks, and thus unable to resolve during the short trips migrants typically make for holidays and family occasions.[3] For those applying for a new voter identification, they are required to show proof of citizenship such as a passport or birth certificate, which many migrants may not have.[4] These restrictions are a deliberate design of the 2005 diaspora voting rights law, crafted in large part by the PRI in order to mitigate an unfavourable skew against their party. As the following section will detail, the PRI's assent for the enfranchisement of a largely hostile diaspora electorate was the culmination in a long campaign for rights by the Mexican diaspora, and acknowledgement that it was inevitable, and effort to maintain control over the process.

Mexico's enfranchisement of its diaspora citizens was a largely bureaucratic, administrative process, developed by political elites within the Foreign Ministry. A series of constitutional reforms (1990, 1994, 1996) under the Salinas and Zedillo administrations led to

incremental steps towards diaspora enfranchisement, resulting in a study by the elections board (then IFE, now INE) in 1988 on the logistics of a system allowing for voting from abroad. Although the final law was passed under a PAN administration, the bill was crafted largely by PRI-appointed ministry officials with minimal outside input, though ultimate pressure, from diaspora groups in the US. Thus the 2005 law reflected the PRI's historic 'policy of no policy' of demobilization and containment of the Mexican diaspora, which it viewed as a potential threat, originally to the party's hegemonic rule, and later to its electoral fortunes in the post-PRI era, as well as national sovereignty (historically territorially delineated) and independence of the Mexican government from foreign (chiefly US) influence (Parra 2005).

The first efforts at extending voting rights abroad began under PRI administrations, at a time when the one-party era was coming to a close. In an atmosphere of increasing demands for democratization and transparency throughout Latin America, lingering outrage at what many Mexicans viewed as a stolen election in 1988, and a growing prominence of diaspora groups through hometown associations and remittance flows, the Salinas and Zedillo governments concluded they could not ignore demands for voting rights by an increasingly active and economically powerful diaspora enfranchisement (Goldring 2002).[5] Instead, the PRI government and its party-aligned bureaucrats within the Foreign Ministry developed a highly restrictive system of absentee balloting which, while nominally extending suffrage and thereby engaging with the powerful diaspora community, kept that community contained and its influence on elections minimal. Extremely low diaspora voter turnout in the subsequent 2006 and 2012 elections also served the party's interest by reinforcing the notion that Mexican migrants are uninterested in participating in elections, unduly influenced by the US, and thus safely kept at the margins of Mexican politics.

The final bill passed under the subsequent Fox administration in 2005, thus the PAN could take credit for the final implementation of diaspora voting. However the PRI, after having blocked 19 previous bills when the party controlled the majority in the Chamber of Deputies, was the party to bring the final, successful bill to a vote, introduced by PRI representative Laura

Maria Elena Rivera; thus it can be plausibly concluded that, had the PRI retained the presidency in 2000, the 2005 diaspora voting law would have passed in much the same, i.e., restrictive form.

The 2005 diaspora enfranchisement law coupled a complicated and costly system of voter registration with a restrictive set of electoral rules regarding diaspora campaigning. The law specified postal ballots that must be requested six months prior to the election, at a cost of $9. Most notably, the registration process required prior to requesting the ballot disallowed obtaining necessary materials from abroad, instead requiring applicants to travel back to their hometowns in Mexico and apply in person. The process typically took three or more weeks, and thus even those migrants able to travel back home, typically for the holidays, were largely unable to take the time off needed to successfully register. Additionally, documents required for registration included forms of documentation which many migrants – especially those with irregular immigration status – did not have, such as a passport or birth certificate.

The second part of the 2005 bill explicitly prohibited any forms of campaigning or fundraising outside of Mexico, thus barring the kind of campaigning Cárdenas and Fox had carried out openly in the US. The bill did not, however, effectively stop diaspora campaigning; as the next section will detail, candidates found ways to campaign unofficially and before formally declaring their candidacy.

The 2005 diaspora voting bill was a compromise between the PAN and PRI that was politically advantageous to both parties, at the expense of diaspora voter participation – and to the PRD, according to party officials, who uniformly maintained that easing voting restrictions and expanding the diaspora vote would principally benefit their party.[6] The PAN could take credit for fulfilling a campaign pledge by Fox to the diaspora, while the hurdles presented by the registration process restricted likely enfranchisement to a relatively elite electorate whose socioeconomic profile was more predisposed to support the conservative party. The PRI could design the law to effectively restrict the vote as well as campaign activity by their more active rival parties in the diaspora and thereby mitigate the damage of an anti-PRI diaspora vote.

The position of both parties reflected the diaspora skew – favouring the PAN and disfavouring the PRI – and came to be validated by the diaspora results of the two subsequent elections, in which the PAN decisively captured the diaspora vote, contributing to a perception of a right-leaning electorate repeated in Mexican media (Meléndez Yúdico 2012), until the 2016 expansion of voting rights broadened the socioeconomic base of the diaspora electorate beyond the elite profile of diaspora voters in the previous two elections, a change which benefitted MORENA.

Table 3.2 Mexican diaspora vote vs. total vote

	Party	Candidate	Diaspora vote	Total Mexico vote
2006	PAN	Calderón	57.4%	35.9%
	PRD	López Obrador	33.4%	35.3%
	PRI	Madrazo	4.1%	22.3%
2012	PAN	Vázquez Mota	42.2%	25.4%
	PRD	López Obrador	39.0%	31.6%
	PRI	Peña Nieto	15.6%	38.2%
2018	PAN/PRD	Anaya	26.8%	22.3%
	MORENA	López Obrador	64.9%	53.2%
	PRI	Meade	4.7%	16.4%
	Ind.	Rodríguez	1.9%	5.2%

Source: National Electoral Institute, District Voting by Mexican Citizens Residing Abroad.

Results show diaspora voters did not consistently support a single party across all three elections, though the party they supported in each, they supported disproportionately to the Mexican electorate as a whole: diaspora Mexicans voted 57% for the winning PAN candidate, Calderón, in 2006, compared to 36% of Mexican voters, and 42% for the losing PAN candidate, Vázquez Mota, in 2012, compared to 25% of Mexicans. In 2018, MORENA's López Obrador won in a landslide with 53% of the vote, but that landslide was even more pronounced in the diaspora, where he captured 65% of the vote from abroad.

More importantly, results show a consistent pattern of disfavour for the PRI candidate. In two of the three elections, the PRI candidate, Meade and Madrazo, failed to capture even 5% of the diaspora vote. Only in 2012 did the PRI candidate break double digits, and that was winning candidate Peña Nieto. Even then he won just 16% of the diaspora vote, compared to 38% of the overall diaspora vote. Only 2018 novelty candidate Jaime Rodríguez, 'El Bronco,' won fewer diaspora votes, likely due to his obscurity and limited appeal, mostly to his home state of Nuevo Leon.

This anti-PRI sentiment is likely informed by migrants' motivations for migration and the PRI's history of resistance to extending civil rights to Mexicans abroad. Policy towards Mexican emigrants under successive PRI governments during the hegemonic era alternated between indifference and hostility (Delano 2011). These administrations saw migrants as a political liability, a constituency that could only have negative consequences to diplomatic and trade relations with the US, and thus avoided having an active migration policy, which García y Griego and Verea 1988 term Mexico's (and the PRI's) 'policy of no policy.'

Official rhetoric discouraging emigration cast migrants as traitors betraying their country for a hostile neighbour to the north, with migration seen by the government not as a personal decision but a humiliation of the Mexican nation by both migrants and the US government (Fitzgerald 2005). Migrants were branded in official rhetoric as 'traitors' (Castillo Flores 2010). Later PRI governments looked more favourably towards emigration as a tool for ridding the country of surplus unemployed labourers and otherwise unwanted citizens (García y Griego 1983), and only in the 1970s and 1980s, under the Echeverría and Salinas administrations, did PRI governments make any effort to reach out to migrants as such with community investment programmes. In response to a mix of diaspora lobbying, changing domestic political pressures and global trends, the PRI, like incumbent parties in other countries gradually evolved on the issue of diaspora enfranchisement (Smith 2006; Lafleur 2011, 2013; Turcu and Urbatsch 2014). Throughout the seven – decade period of PRI rule, however, migrants were treated as

instrumental tools for state development and foreign policy, whose migration was alternately blocked or encouraged as it suited the larger policy concerns of the state and the party.

Diaspora campaigning by Mexican parties

The following section describes the historical evolution of diaspora outreach by Mexico's parties, through the development of Mexico into a multi-party system, the enfranchisement of its citizens residing abroad, and campaign activity by Mexican candidates in the US, based on interviews with and travel records of Mexican party officials.

Diaspora outreach was limited prior to the period of competitive elections in Mexico. PRI governments generally ignored expatriate Mexicans under a policy of non-intervention in what was seen as US affairs. It was the internal division of the PRI which provoked the first competitive elections in Mexico in 1988, and the opposition candidacy of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, spurred the first real efforts to mobilize the Mexican diaspora for a political campaign, visiting Mexican communities in the US and promising to advocate on their behalf. For this reason, PRD officials interviewed expressed frustration about the PAN's success in winning the greatest diaspora support, as they saw themselves as the first to reach out to the diaspora and therefore the rightful champions of diaspora interests.[7] Carlos Salinas, the winner of the disputed 1988 election in the face of heavy diaspora support for his opponent, initiated in 1990 the most comprehensive migrant outreach programme of any PRI administration, dubbed *acercamiento* ('closeness') (Goldring 2002; Smith and Bakker 2008). Taking off on the 1986 amnesty by Reagan, the Salinas administration sought to push the US for further legalization of undocumented migrants, to establish a Mexican American lobby that could work on behalf of Mexican state interests (in particular, for what would become the North American Free Trade Agreement), and to assure the continued flow of remittances to the country. Thus, the Salinas administration inaugurated the *Programa Paisano* to facilitate family travel, which later led to

the creation of State Offices Attending to Migrants (OFAMS) to build contacts with Mexicans in the US under Fox.

The post-PRI era saw the effective positioning of the PAN as the most favoured party of the diaspora and, if not quite building a deep diaspora network, making more effort than its rivals to reach out to Mexicans in the US on a community level. In the 2000 presidential election, both the PAN and PRD made extending voting rights part of their campaign platforms (Calderón Chelius 2003). PAN candidate Vicente Fox, like Cárdenas before him, campaigned in the US, visiting Mexican communities in Los Angeles and Chicago.[8] While in the US, Fox famously passed out phone cards, telling supporters to call their relatives and tell them to vote for him (Aguirre 2000). Mexican migrants in California and Illinois held mock elections in conjunction with the 2000 elections, favouring Fox by wide margins (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003). As the first post-PRI president, Fox retained widespread support of the Mexican diaspora, made frequent trips to Mexican American communities, and referred to migrants in a 2001 visit to Los Angeles as 'heroes of Mexico,' a remarkable rhetorical change from the 'traitors' slur of the hegemonic PRI era. The Fox administration established an office within the Foreign Ministry, the Institute for Mexicans Abroad (IME), sought, unsuccessfully, to lobby the US Congress for a comprehensive immigration reform bill, and made good on its promise to extend voting rights for Mexicans abroad, while under watchful pressure of migrant groups such as the Coalition for the Political Rights of Mexicans Abroad (CDPME), which mobilized to stop a delay in implementation of the bill threatened by then-Secretary of Governance Santiago Creel. In the subsequent two presidential elections, 2006 and 2012, PAN candidates retained the overwhelming support of the diaspora electorate.

Passage of the diaspora voting law in 2005 had a negative impact on overall level of diaspora campaigning, which was virtually nonexistent in the 2006 election. No candidate campaigned personally in the diaspora. To evade the ban on explicit overseas campaigning, the PAN sent then-candidate Felipe Calderón's campaign director, Ricardo Pascoe to campaign on his behalf in the US; Pascoe held a series of meetings and interviews with diaspora community

and business leaders in Los Angeles in June. Neither PRI candidate Madrazo nor PRD candidate López Obrador, their parties or campaigns, engaged in diaspora outreach, the latter over the objections of his campaign policy adviser. According that adviser, his narrow loss in that election convinced him that diaspora outreach was worth the effort.[9]

The 2012 elections saw a shift towards some hesitant diaspora outreach on the part of the PAN and PRD. Both candidates made unofficial visits to migrant communities the US López Obrador, who had shunned the Mexican diaspora in his 2006 run, visited Los Angeles in June 2011, before becoming the official PRD candidate, holding an event establishing a branch of his then-nascent MORENA movement, at a time when he was fending off rival for the party nomination, Mexico City mayor Marcelo Ebrard (Castro 2011). López Obrador's message to supporters was less campaign focussed and more oriented towards movement-building: he called on each person in the meeting to 'commit to convince five other people to join this movement and create a force of voters for the 2012 election' (Lozano 2011). In his campaign speeches, he promised to pressure the US government to legalize undocumented immigrants, and to improve services at Mexican consulates (Schütze 2016).

Josefina Vázquez Mota of the PAN also visited New York prior to officially announcing her candidacy, and later made a two day visit to California in March 2012, holding a closed door meeting with 100 community leaders in Santa Ana, another meeting with the group Hispanics Organized for Political Equality (HOPE), and an open event at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. She later also travelled to Chicago and spoke at the Instituto del Progreso Latino. As her California and Chicago visits were after her official nomination as PAN candidate, she avoided mentioning anything explicitly related to the campaign, but called for 'unity' in the midst of a party leadership crisis involving PAN president Gustavo Madero, and a challenge from a rival candidate of her own, Senator Santiago Creel.[10] Like López Obrador, in her speeches she emphasized the issue of US immigration reform, migrant security, collective remittance programmes and consular services, all reflecting demands of the diaspora. Only PRI candidate and eventual winner Enrique Peña Nieto eschewed any visits to Mexican communities

abroad during or prior to his campaign, though the candidate did participate in a video promotion of the diaspora vote organized by Federal Elections Institute in which all candidates participated.[11]

The 2018 election showed a similar pattern from the 2006 and 2012 elections: an upward trajectory in intensity of diaspora campaigning, and an unevenness in campaigning across parties, with no participation at all by the PRI and greater participation by the party that ultimately gained the diaspora's favour, this time MORENA. López Obrador, completing his about-face of his rejection of the diaspora in 2006, this time embraced it with enthusiasm, embarking on a seven-city tour of the US. His (unofficial) campaign took him to Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, New York, Phoenix, El Paso and Laredo, a notable expansion of the traditional campaign stops for Mexican presidential candidates of Chicago and L.A. to smaller cities in border states. Anaya, as well, visited Los Angeles and had both a community rally and smaller meetings with business leaders of the Mexican community. The difference between the rival candidates in terms of rhetoric was negligible: both candidates excoriated Trump and promised to defend Mexicans living in the US from what they regarded as xenophobic persecution by the Trump administration.

What differed between the two candidates was their manner of appealing to migrants. While Anaya stuck to policy promises, López Obrador billed his campaign stops as a tour in defence of immigrants, one that emphasized service provision. López Obrador brought with him a team of 100 attorneys and translators, who he offered to lend to those people attending seeking legal help. This tactic dovetailed with López Obrador's messaging, promising not merely to push back against Trump – he promised to seek a resolution condemning him at the United Nations – but to direct Mexican embassies and consulates in the US to offer services to defend Mexican immigrants legally, set himself up to be the candidate to reap the political dividends of Trump's anti-Mexican rhetoric from that moment on (Vergara 2017).

Nevertheless, these visits were the extent of national level campaigning by Mexican parties, reflecting the obstacles set by the 2005 diaspora voting law. No party held rallies or

community events, engaged in open fundraising, voter registration or election day get-out-the-vote efforts, nor bought campaign ads aimed at diaspora voters or their relatives. And no party mobilized diaspora supporters to lobby on their behalf or counter rival party campaigns. What instrumental value diaspora campaigning had was more for candidates consolidating their own bids for party nomination against those of rivals. And the PRI remains uninterested and unwilling to engage with the diaspora at the national level.

At the state level, however, the party has sent candidates to visit diaspora communities in the US. This is most common in states where the PAN is weak and the PRI competes primarily with the PRD, such as Guerrero and Zacatecas.[12] Former PRI governor of Nuevo Leon, Natividad Gonzalez Paras, reports having campaigned in Texas.[13] Diaspora voting in gubernatorial elections succeeded the 2005 national law, but efforts to extend suffrage in certain migrant-sending states preceded the law, often under pressure from US-based HTAs and their powerful state-wide federations. In 2003, Zacatecas passed a state law, recognizing binational residency, allowing Zacatecans residing abroad to run for state and local office, and setting aside two seats in the state legislature for migrant representatives, reforms which were pushed by the Los Angeles-based Zacatecan Civic Front. The same year in Michoacan, then-governor Lázaro Cárdenas Batel signed a law recognizing migrants' right to suffrage, paving the way for the state's 2006 external voting rights law. Both Cárdenas Batel and then-Governor Ricardo Monreal Ávila of Zacatecas were members of the PRD at the time. Thus, both the PRD and the PRI have reacted to a comparably more favourable diaspora skew in certain states with greater state-level outreach efforts.

Mexican parties' campaigning is uniquely informed by the legacy skew of the diaspora, one which disfavours incumbent parties from the initial period of emigration. In their campaign rhetoric, emphasis on US immigration issues and citizenship rights, and appeals to their influence, Mexican parties clearly view the Mexican diaspora as a special electorate, distinct from and consequential to the hometown electorate. This is self-evident in the 2006, 2012 and 2018 election results, in which diaspora Mexican voters disfavoured the PRI by a margin much

greater than the Mexican electorate as a whole. It is also evident in the way the Mexican political establishment has sought to at different moments contain or loosen the diaspora vote in the 2005 diaspora voting law and 2016 electoral reforms. That the PRI was instrumental in advancing both reflects the motivation of the party on the losing end of the diaspora's partisan skew to control the diaspora's electoral impact and its unique veto power to do so without necessarily engaging with it directly through campaign outreach.

Conclusion

Diaspora campaign activity speaks to the nature of both migrants and parties as increasingly transnational actors – a process which continues to deepen despite often significant institutional barriers. Parties seek support where they can find it and are not restricted by territorial boundaries or even outright legal prohibitions. Low turnout in the diaspora does not preclude diaspora campaigning, as parties view migrants as vectors of influence over voters at home. Migrants, in turn, feel increasingly empowered to demand a voice in home country politics, often through diaspora organizations with a high degree of autonomy from the party system.

The case of Mexico is illustrative of partisan dynamics common among many diaspora communities and their impacts on diaspora enfranchisement and campaigning. The strong partisan skew against the long-time incumbent party in the period of emigration – the PRI – influences the restrictive diaspora voting and campaign laws which limit infrastructure and outreach by parties abroad. It also creates a swing electorate that is perceived by interview subjects as 'up for grabs' for any party that could position itself as the most viable opposition to the PRI: historically the PAN, but recently MORENA.

For parties disfavoured by the diaspora, policy is not one of engagement but containment. The PRI's diaspora strategy, though not one that can be characterized as outreach per se, has been relatively successful. It has succeeded in demobilizing a very large and potentially electorally consequential diaspora that, were diaspora voter participation to become widespread,

would surely strongly disadvantage the PRI. Gradual changes in this demobilization strategy, itself a continuation of the PRI's historic 'policy of no policy' of indifference to Mexican migrants, can be seen in the 2016 electoral law reform, which suggests greater confidence that the party can overcome historical antipathies in the diaspora, or perhaps simply confidence that voter participation rates rising from such a low baseline of just 40,000 votes nationally would be unlikely to do the party much damage. In 2018, with López Obrador's blowout win, it was a moot point. But even the doubling of voter rolls in the diaspora left a diaspora electorate limited to less than 100,000. Even to a constituency that was as strongly anti-PRI, it was a concession the PRI could afford to give.

Restrictive diaspora voting also benefits the PAN by restricting effective enfranchisement to the most PAN-friendly demographic of Mexican migrants, those with the means to go through a lengthy and complicated registration process. But the party still receives political dividends in the diaspora as the only party to have defeated the PRI, and thus continues to engage with the diaspora through candidate and official visits – even in violation of the (spirit of) the law, where its candidates, notably Vázquez Mota, receive a comparably friendlier reception than they did in Mexico.

The left parties, which since the inception of the PRD have positioned themselves as champion of Mexican migrants, stood to gain the most from greater diaspora engagement as well as a lifting of diaspora vote restrictions. Due to the López Obrador split and subsequent collapse of the PRD, the beneficiary of this expansion was MORENA. The PRD's inability to capitalize on the anti-PRI diaspora skew prior to this was hampered in part by the PAN's prestige as the winning party in 2000, as well as by an underdeveloped diaspora infrastructure, which only gained official party recognition in the last decade, was largely *ad hoc* in function, and poorly integrated with the party. It remains to be seen if MORENA achieves what the other parties have been unable (or unwilling) to build, an institutionalized diaspora party network capable of grassroots mass mobilization, but this is unlikely. All parties' diaspora outreach is hobbled by campaign law and the fact that the default vehicle for migrant transnational organization remains

non-party organizations and hometown associations, which are much older, larger, more extensive and more active than party networks.

Interviews with party officials indicate a growing consensus among all parties that the diaspora matters and cannot be ignored. Due to the clout parties perceive migrants to have at home, the historic PRI 'policy of no policy' and strategy of containment is no longer viable or desirable, even for the PRI. The anti-PRI vote is still not much of a vote, and it has not precluded PRI inroads into migrant federations on a state level. And while the anti-PRI leanings of the Mexican diaspora has so far chiefly benefitted one party, there is reason to expect, given the geographically and socioeconomically diverse profile of the Mexican diaspora as a whole, that should the diaspora electorate continue to broaden and diversify, this will open the doors to other candidates and parties to gain its support, as did MORENA. One thing is apparent: continued legal prohibitions on diaspora campaigning will not stop such campaigning from taking place. If anything, it is on the rise in both national and state elections.

Appendix: interview subjects

Name	Party	Position	Location
Natividad Gonzalez Paras	PRI	Ex-Governor of Nuevo Leon	Mexico
Augustin Barrios Gomez	PRD	Member of Chamber of Deputies	Mexico
Luis Carlos Ugalde	PAN appointment	Ex Director of Federal Election Institute	Mexico
Lorena Buzon	PRI	Office of the Presidency	Mexico
Juan Rebolledo	PRI	Ministry of Finance	Mexico
Yomara Guerra	PRI	Office of the Presidency	Mexico
Francisco de la Torre	PRI appointment	Executive Director, Institute for Mexicans Abroad	Mexico

Patricio Ballados	PRI appointment	Ex Coordinator, Overseas Voting for Federal Election Institute	Mexico
Lazaro Cardenas	PRD	Ex-Governor of Michoacan	Mexico
Dalia Moreno	PRI appointment	Ex Coordinator, Overseas Voting for Federal Election Institute	Mexico
Carlos Heredia	PRD	Ex Member of Chamber of Deputies	Mexico
Fernando Rodriguez Doval	PAN	Member of Chamber of Deputies	Mexico
Alejandra Reynoso	PAN	Member of Chamber of Deputies	Mexico
Gabriel Farfan Mares	PRD	Ex Policy Adviser of 2006 Lopez Obrador presidential campaign	Mexico

Notes

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1 Interview with Ruben Olmos, October 2015.

2 Interview with Lázaro Cárdenas, August 2013.

3 New rules issued by the Mexican Electoral Institute (INE) now allow Mexican citizens abroad to apply for voting credentials at Mexican consulates without having to travel back to Mexico. However, applicants must still provide passports, birth certificates or other documentation as proof of citizenship.

4 Under Mexico's 2005 law granting voting rights to Mexicans residing abroad, citizens must have a voting card issued by the Federal Elections Institute to request an absentee ballot. In order to obtain a voting card, citizens must apply in person in their hometown in Mexico and provide an official proof of citizenship such as a birth certificate or passport. Critics of the process have noted many Mexican citizens residing abroad do not have the required proof of citizenship, especially migrants who are undocumented, and undocumented migrants are even less likely to risk traveling back to Mexico in order to obtain proper documentation to vote (Gris Legorreta 2014).

5 Indeed, remittances are an issue with great political significance for parties in migrant-sending countries in Mexico. On the one side, safeguarding remittance flows for those voters relying on support from US-based relatives is an increasingly crucial campaign promise for Mexican politicians campaigning abroad. On the other, remittances can be destabilizing for incumbent parties by weakening their hold on voters through clientelist means (Pfutze 2014).

6 Interviews with Augustin Barrio Gomez, Lázaro Cárdenas, Carlos Heredia and G. Farfan Mares, June – August 2013.

7 Interview with Lázaro Cárdenas, August 2013.

8 'La Villita grita Viva México!', *Los Angeles Times*, 11 September 2009.

9 Interview with G. Farfan Mares, June 2013.

10 'Desde California, Vázquez Mota llama a la Unidad en el PAN', *Info 7*, 10 March 2012. Retreived from www.info7.mx/nacional/desde-california-vazquez-mota-llama-a-la-unidad-en-el-pan–/590658.

11 Interview with Luis Carlos Ugalde, July 2013.

12 See, e.g., PRI candidate for governor of Guerrero Héctor Astudillo Flores' visit to the Federation of Clubs of Guerrero in Chicago in 2004 ('Van a Chicago Héctor Astudillo y Zeferino', *El Sur*, 23 September 2004. Accessed 15 March 2016); 'PRI Candidate for Governor of Zacatecas Miguel Alonso Reyes' Visit to the Federation of Clubs of Zacatecas of Southern California in Los Angeles' [Miguel Alonso Reyes, candidato del PRI a gobernador de Zacatecas, visita California], *La Naranja*, 14 June 2010. Accessed 15 March 2016; and 'PRI Candidate for Governor of Zacatecas Alejandro Tello Cristerna's Visit With Business Owners in Chicago' [Migrantes de Chicago manifiestan

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