

The Fraudulent Mexican Presidential Elections

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Resumen: los partidos políticos más importantes en México son el Partido Revolucionario Institucional, el Partido Acción Nacional y el Partido de la Revolución Democrática. Estos partidos fueron creados con el propósito de representar al pueblo mexicano y para favorecer el desarrollo de la democracia en dicho país. Sin embargo, México tiene una democracia corrupta con elecciones fraudulentas, lo que a su vez trascendió en el control del Partido Revolucionario Institucional por 71 años consecutivos. No obstante, cuando el Partido Acción Nacional llegó al poder, demostró que eran igual de corruptos que el Partido Revolucionario Institucional, debido a que participaron en actividades fraudulentas antes y durante las elecciones presidenciales del 2006. El objetivo de este trabajo es analizar las diferentes técnicas ilegítimas que fueron utilizadas por el Partido Revolucionario Institucional y el Partido Acción Nacional con el fin de ganar las elecciones por las que Felipe Calderón y Enrique Peña Nieto ascendieron a la Presidencia de México en 2006 y 2012 respectivamente.

Palabras Clave: fraude electoral, PRI, PRD, PAN, Elecciones Presidenciales, Televisa, TvAzecta, López Obrador, Peña Nieto, Calderón, México.

Abstract: The most important political parties in Mexico are the Institutional Revolutionary Party, the National Action Party, and the Democratic Revolutionary Party. These political parties were created to represent the Mexican people and for the development of democracy. Nonetheless, the results have been far from a legitimate democracy, it has only created a perceived democracy with elections that are far from equal, resulting in the Institutional Revolutionary Party control of power for 71 consecutive years. When the National Action Party came to power, they demonstrated they were as corrupt as the Institutional Revolutionary Party after participating in fraudulent activities before and during the presidential elections of 2006. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the different illegal techniques the Institutional Revolutionary Party and the National Action Party used in order to win the presidential elections, following with a ruling by IFE stating that these parties did nothing illegal, resulting in Felipe Calderón and Enrique Peña Nieto as Presidents of Mexico in 2006 and 2012 respectively.

Keywords: Electoral fraud, PRI, PRD, PAN, Presidential Elections, Televisa, TvAzecta, López Obrador, Peña Nieto, Calderón, Mexico.

Introduction

Mexico is a country filled with economic, political, and social issues. Although the country has been an independent nation for almost two centuries, political stability has never truly occurred; only a farce image of stability exists given that the Mexican political system is intrinsically tied with the elite class. This faux instability was held in tact by the Institutional Revolutionary Party who governed for seven decades continuously. This hegemonic, single-party control of power ended with the 2000 election when the National Action Party won the presidency. The change of a political party brought hope to the Mexican people. They believed that by defeating the hegemonic Institutional Revolutionary Party their future would be promising. Nonetheless, the National Action Party demonstrated they were as dishonest as the Institutional Revolutionary Party by using fraudulent strategies

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toward leftist member Andrés Manuel López Obrador in order to win the presidential elections of 2006. In 2012 the Institutional Revolutionary Party came back to power, though it has been noted that their tactics were fraudulent due to the buying of votes. Many view Peña Nieto as an illegitimate president, which has brought Mexican sovereignty into question by the international community. Although the PRI has tried to prove that it no longer is the dogmatic, authoritarian party, it was famous for in previous decades, it has shown that their illegal tactics have not changed. They continue to be the same party as before, representing the ultra-rich at the expense of the poor.

1. Political Parties

1.1. Institutional Revolutionary Party

The formations of the current political parties were created after the Mexican Revolution, in 1929. General Plutarco Elías Calles created the National Revolutionary Party (PNR), later renamed Mexican Revolution (PMR), and currently known as Institutional Revolutionary Party (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, hereafter PRI). This party was created in order to consolidate Mexico's diverse groups of revolutionary caudillos. It became the primary vehicle for selecting Mexico's presidents as well as popularizing and implementing their programs. The party would work closely with the government to maintain a political elite in power through patronage and corruption, downsizing of the military, and controlling political opponents through electoral fraud, violence, and manipulation of the judiciary.² After several years, President Lázaro Cárdenas decided to re-organize the PRN to include workers, peasants, government employees, and the military which resulted in the renaming of the party into, the PMR. Lastly, in 1946 president Manuel Ávila Camacho renamed it PRI, which is still used today. This political party was in power for 71 years until the year 2000.³

1.2. National Action Party

After various years of a single party system and economic misfortunes, Manuel Gómez Morín decided to unite individuals with similar ideologies to form a political party in order to challenge the one-party control of power by the PRI. Gomez Morin established the National Action Party (*Partido Acción Nacional*, hereafter PAN) in 1939 and remained the party's president through 1949. It was created to challenge the single political party, Institutional Revolutionary Party, due the reforms introduced by President Lázaro Cárdenas and to defend Catholic values.⁴ The PAN first contested national elections in 1943, but it generally fared poor at all levels until the 1980's, which was largely the result of the broad patronage system that the PRI had developed and the frequent use by the PRI of electoral fraud to secure its dominant status.⁵

² Michael Gonsales. *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940* (Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2002).

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Charles Ameringer. *Political parties of the Americas, 1980s to 1990s: Canada, Latin America, and the West Indies* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood P, 1992).

⁵ The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. "National Action Party (PAN) (political party, Mexico)." *Encyclopedia Britannica Online.*, n.d. Web. 1 Aug. 2013

The former governor of Guanajuato, Vicente Fox, became the PAN presidential candidate for the 2000 presidential elections. Due to dissatisfaction with the PRI over the corruption and economic disparities between the Mexican populations, Vicente Fox won the presidency of Mexico – effectively ending the 71 years of hegemonic political power by the PRI. Furthermore, Felipe Calderón, a longtime PAN member, won the 2006 presidential election. However, Mexico's continuing recession, high poverty rate, and drug cartel war contributed to the PAN defeat by the PRI for the presidency in the 2012 presidential election.

1.3. Democratic Revolutionary Party

During the 1988 presidential elections the counting for votes were processed through a computer system, operated by the Federal Election Commission, and led by Manuel Bartlett Díaz, the Secretary of the Interior. On election day, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, candidate for the political party National Democratic Front, had majority of the votes, but at night the system crashed. According to the official website of The Democratic Revolutionary Party, the Electoral College fraudulently declared Carlos Salinas de Gortari President with more than 50 percent of the votes officially recognized.⁶

A year later, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Solórzano, Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, and Ifigenia Martínez founded The Democratic Revolutionary Party (*Partido de la Revolución Democrática*, hereafter PRD), which is considered a left-wing party. This party began as a union of various leftist parties and organizations: the Mexican Workers Party, The Socialist Party of Mexico, People's Revolutionary Party, People's Revolutionary Movement, The Communist Left Union, and The Socialist Workers Party.⁷

The ideals of the PRD consists of: respecting the will of the people expressed at the polls, freedom of speech, civil rights, fight against corruption, the protection of energy resources and communications. Moreover, they suggest secular and free education at all levels and meets domestic demand, economic aid to the most disadvantaged for granting subsidies for staples. Militants and leaders stand for and fight for gender equality and the right to decide for women and same sex marriages.⁸

2. Broadcast Television in Mexico

The two most important media companies in Mexico are Televisa and Televisión Azteca. These companies are able to control broadcast television within Mexico. Televisa is the largest media company in the Spanish-speaking world and it controls around a 70 percent share of the broadcast television market within Mexico, and is also the principal satellite and cable TV operator in Mexico.⁹ Both owners Ricardo Salinas Pliego and Emilio Azcarraga Jean are not only among the richest in Mexico, but also in the world.¹⁰

⁶ “Historia del Partido de la Revolución Democrática.” *Partido de la Revolución Democrática*: 12.

⁷ *Íbid.*

⁸ *Íbid.*

⁹ Jack Plunkett. *Plunkett's entertainment & media industry almanac 2004*. (Houston, Tex.: Plunkett Research, 2004).

¹⁰ “The World's Billionaires.” *Forbes* Mar. 2013.

2.1. Televisa, TvAzteca, and The Televisa Law

Televisa operates four commercial networks and of the 260 local broadcast partners that carry it, 223 are partially or wholly owned by them. It is also a 51 percent shareholder in Cablevisión (cable operator) and a 60 percent shareholder in Innova, which controls SKY home satellite service.¹¹ The U.S. Spanish-language network Univision is partially owned by Televisa. They are also involved with radio in which they own 50 percent of 17 stations in Mexico.¹² This company is also involved in sports, with three soccer teams (America, San Luis, Necaxa), and its own soccer stadium. Televisa also owns an editorial; it is one of the largest publishers of Spanish-language magazines in the world. The net sales for Televisa in 2003 were equivalent to \$2.3 billion dollars.¹³

After more than two decades of Televisa controlling Mexico's television network, Televisión Azteca became their first competitor. It was created when the government owned Imevisión chain was sold to Ricardo Salinas-Pliago for \$641 million.¹⁴ It has only two channels capable of reaching 94 percent and 97 percent of Mexican households. TvAzteca is also owner of Mexican soccer leagues and owns a few other enterprises, even in media-related industries, and concentrates almost exclusively on broadcast television.¹⁵

The Federal Law of Radio and Television and the Federal Law on Telecommunications better known as The Televisa Law was approved in 2006 by the Mexican government. It favors the deregulation of the digital spectrum in the duopoly Televisa and Televisión Azteca. The book, *Human Rights Watch Mexico's National Human Rights Commission* states:

The law allows a few telecommunication companies to keep control of new channels created on the radio electric spectrum through improvements in digital technology. The new rules established economic criteria to determine access to radio electric frequencies and made it harder for non-commercial radio stations to obtain such access.

¹⁶

The implementation of this new law demonstrates the influence these companies have over the Mexican government.

3. Presidential elections 2006

It had been six years since PAN had won the past presidential elections and on June 2006 the Mexican population would have to vote for their new president. The former Head of Government of the Federal District, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, member of the PRD, and Felipe Calderón, member of the PAN, would be the top

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Howard Blumenthal, and Oliver R. Goodenough. *This business of television*. Rev. and updated 3rd ed. (New York: Billboard Books, 2006).

¹⁴ Chappell Lawson, *Building the Fourth Estate: Democratization and the Rise of a Free Press in Mexico*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) 95-96.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ "Human Rights Watch Mexico's National Human Rights Commission 20." *Human Rights Watch* 20 (2008): Web. 7 Oct.2013 <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/mexico0208_1.pdf>

candidates in the elections. After a ridged election in which Felipe Calderón was victorious, obtaining 36.38 percent of the votes.¹⁷ However, López Obrador, as well as the Mexican population, were dissatisfied with the results. They demanded a recount of the votes since they believed the results were altered to favor the PAN party. During the election campaign as well as after the election, there were numerous fraudulent actions committed towards the leftist political party, the PRD.

The journal, *Television News, Mexico's 2000 Elections and Media*, mentions that a few studies have demonstrated that exposure to a conventional news broadcasts during a campaign can lead to important, significant changes in public opinion and voting preferences.¹⁸ Therefore, as mentioned before, Mexico broadcast television has limited competition thereby influencing a large number of their audience with no other networks to challenge their views. The *Agenda-setting effects on vote choice: Evidence from the 2006 Mexican election* research followed the study of Son and Weaver, which determined that Televisa and TvAzteca were favoring the candidates of the PRI and PAN by providing them more exposure on their channels. The two Mexican TV networks analyzed were Televisa (*El Noticiero con Joaquín López Dóriga*) and Televisión Azteca (*Hechos de la Noche*). The study was conducted for six months starting on February 12, 2006 and ending on July 2, 2006.

Their research takes into account the competition among candidates for the relative salience of their campaigns and for limited TV airtime, and it also allows for a better comparison with a candidate's poll standing. All stories that mentioned a candidate were added and the total was converted to a 100-point scale. Then, each candidate's share of coverage was calculated and compared to the other two.

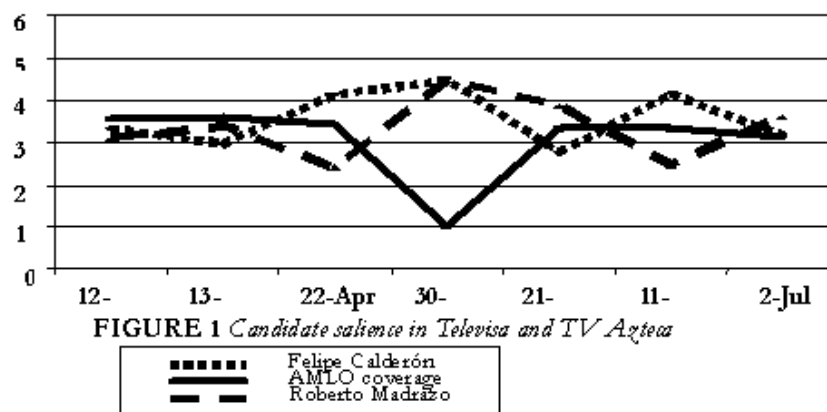


Figure 1 shows each candidate's immediate salience, and overall, Calderón received more coverage than López Obrador and Madrazo. On April 25th the first presidential debate was held and it appears to have been a turning point for both Calderón and López Obrador. Nonetheless, on April 30th after the debate, Calderón captured 45 percent of the news coverage, while López Obrador garnered only 10 percent. This reveals the least popular candidate of the three —PRI candidate

¹⁷ "Análisis Estadístico de los Resultados Publicados por el PREP." *ACNielsen 1* (2006): 1-6. *Instituto Nacional Electoral*. Web. 27 July 2013.

<http://www.ife.org.mx/docs/Internet/Docs_estaticos/Proceso2005_2006/informes_prep/Elecciones_Presidenciales2006_final.pdf>.

¹⁸ Chappell Lawson, and James McCann. "Television News, Mexico's 2000 Elections and Media Effects in Emerging Democracies." *Cambridge University Press 1* (2004): 1-30. Web. 1 Sept. 2013. <http://web.pdx.edu/~mev/pdf/Lawson_McCann.pdf>.

Madrazo— succeeded in getting a higher percentage of news coverage than López Obrador.¹⁹

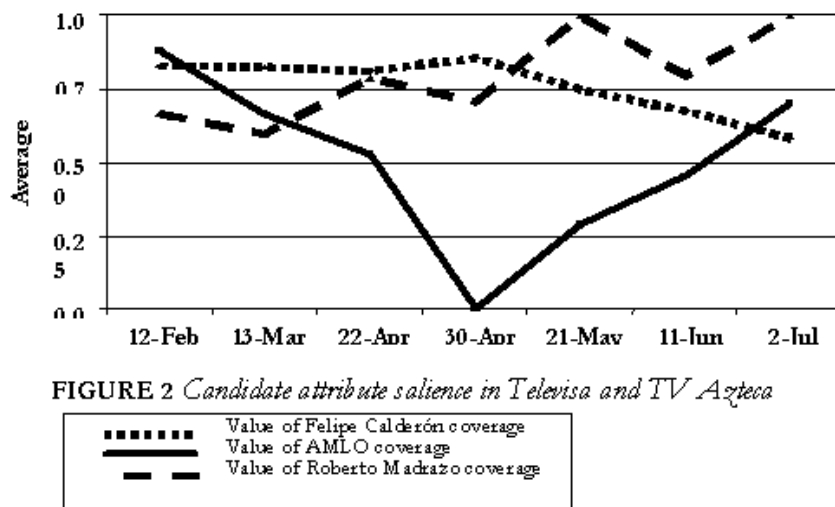


FIGURE 2 Candidate attribute salience in Televisa and TV Azteca

Figure 2 displays the trend of the three candidates immediate attribute salience. The two candidates, Calderón and Madrazo, had more network coverage than López Obrador:

all three lines of candidate attribute salience stray far from the value of 0.50 (neutral), which suggests that Televisa and TV Azteca were not balanced in their coverage of the campaign. This, however, is not a surprise because both networks have been traditionally hostile towards leftist candidates.²⁰

Moreover, during the last year of the of former presidents Vicente Fox government, they began exposing false propaganda towards López Obrador, but failed to convince the Mexican people. Their strategy backfired when López Obrador gained more support than before. Fox broke the law by campaigning in favor of the PAN member, Felipe Calderón, and by criticizing López Obrador.²¹ Business groups, as well as conservative Catholics, feared that the leftist candidate was gaining too much popularity. They flooded the television and radio with ads attacking López Obrador comparing him to Hitler, Mussolini and Hugo Chávez:

López Obrador: “a danger for Mexico” is what they advertised. After months of these anti-López Obrador ads on the air, the Federal

¹⁹ Sebastián Valenzuela, and Maxwell McCombs. “Agenda-setting effects on vote choice: Evidence from the 2006 Mexican election.” *University of Texas At Austin* 1 (2007): Web. 12 Oct. 2013 <<http://web.mit.edu/clawson/www/polisci/research/mexico06/ICA%202007%20Mexican%202006%20Election.doc>>

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ John Gibler. *México rebelde: crónicas de poder e insurrección*. (Mexico City: Debate, 2011.)

Electoral Tribunal declared that it was illegal and ordered their removal.²²

The documentary, *Fraude: México 2006*, directed by Luis Mandoki, demonstrates how the PAN and powerful businesses, such as Televisa enforced the victory of Felipe Calderón, while it was evident that Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador was the winner. The documentary shows various fraudulent activities, which accused the PAN of fraudulent activities.²³ One of the accusations was the alteration of the ballot boxes during the election. According to the, *Achromatic Fraud in Elections of July 2, 2006*, their study shows that the ballots boxes during the counting were altered since the number of people registered exceeded the people who actually voted.²⁴

After these elections the PAN demonstrated that it was as corrupt as their long-term rival, the PRI. Nonetheless, the PRD believed it had another opportunity for triumph in the 2012 since they believed the PRI would never gain power again, but PRD was defeated once again with fraudulent acts.

4. Presidential elections 2012

In 2012, the two most important candidates running for the presidential election were Enrique Peña Nieto of the PRI and Andres López Obrador of the PRD. After being defeated in 2006, Andres López Obrador returned to attempt to win the presidential elections. Nonetheless, the PRI used a strategic way of campaigning by claiming that the PRI was no longer corrupt and authoritarian. With surprise and after twelve years under PAN, Enrique Peña Nieto won the presidency of Mexico with a 38 percent plurality versus 32 percent gathered by Andrés Manuel López Obrador²⁵

However, this presidential election was controversial as well due to accusations of fraudulent actions on behalf of the PRI. The first to accuse the PRI of fraudulent activities was López Obrador, stating that they had given out thousands of gift cards valid at a supermarket chain (Soriana) in exchange for votes. As noted in *Mexico's 2012 Elections: The Return of the PRI*, the PRI allegedly handed out these cards to thousands of people in exchange for votes. These actions are illegal which means that the PRI had been part of fraudulent activities. The invoices of these cards have surfaced which tie the transactions to contracts signed between Soriana and several PRI state and local governments, including in Peña Nieto's home state, State of Mexico.²⁶

In addition, the PRI was also accused of handing out prepaid cards in exchange of campaign work. The Monex Case:

was in which PRI members allegedly received prepaid debit cards in exchange for campaign work and voting in the 2012 elections. A sum of \$7.5 million and ten thousand cards were involved. How they were filtered through ghost corporations remains unexplained, though the

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Fraude*, Dir. Luis Mandoki. Maya Entertainment, 2008. DVD.

²⁴ M. Icaza-Herrera. "Fraude Acromático en las elecciones del 2 de julio de 2006." *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* 1 (2006):_Web. 12 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.fisica.unam.mx/octavio/ffrau2.pdf>>

²⁵ Gustavo, Flores-Macías. "Mexico's 2012 Elections: The Return of the PRI." *Journal of Democracy* 24.1 (2013): 128-141.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

head of the PRI's legal team, a former governor of Hidalgo State, claims that there was no wrongdoing.²⁷

The Mexican television companies did not broadcast any of these accusations. This information was being exposed through the Internet and foreign networks. The Venezuelan channel Telesur went to Mexico and broadcasted the news. They interviewed various people who were outside of Soriana waiting to utilize their gift cards. A woman by the name of Isabel Marquez stated that:

they just gave it to me just like that, they told me it had \$500 pesos but it only has \$100 pesos. What can I purchase with \$100 pesos? I disagree with this, in particular that I only receive this card with this amount for one vote. I was told that if I voted for the PRI, I would get a card.²⁸

Likewise, Blanca Marmolejo said:

I went to check my credit on my Soriana gift card and it only had \$100 pesos. I noticed a person had 20 Soriana cards worth \$9,800 pesos. I asked him why do you have so many cards? He said, I have been working a lot... this is a great dishonesty; with \$100 pesos I can only buy a kilo of apples.²⁹

The PRI's false promises of a non-corrupt government are clearly dismantled with these fraudulent activities.

Furthermore, the PRI would send their representatives to various parts of the Mexican Republic such as the State of Mexico where countless vote buying occurred. According to Esther Gutiérrez, a housewife living in the Ecatepec, State of Mexico claims that people on behalf of the PRI went to her neighborhood offering cards:

the people who came to my door were wearing the red PRI shirts and they offered me a card in exchange for my vote. They said if I wanted the card I had to give them a copy of my identification card. They told me I would not have to go to the polls on Election Day. I declined their offer but many of my neighbors accepted it.³⁰

Ana Velázquez, a university student, also claimed that the PRI was offering bribes in her neighborhood:

in the State of Mexico, during the months of March and April the political party PRI was offering bribes in my neighborhood of Juárez Pantitlan (Nezahualcoyotl). They asked for a copy of an identification card in exchange of food or money but I did not accept their bribes. It is

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ "Televisa calle y escándalo Soriana-PRI sigue Prensa internacional. Noticiero. Telesur. Television"

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Esther Gutiérrez. Podcast Audio. 1 Dec. 2013.

not new for the PRI to do these type of briberies, to my knowledge it happens very often.³¹

The PRI took advantage of the difficult situation the Mexican people were facing. They knew that by offering the poor a few pesos in exchange for a vote they would not decline it. None of these accusations were further investigated and no penalties were held against the PRI.

Another act of fraudulent activity by the PRI was the use of publication and diffusion for campaign support after the time allowed. According to The Federal Electoral Institute (*Instituto Federal Electoral, IFE*) Basic Information Mexican Electoral System states the following:

during the 8 days prior to the election and until the official closing time of the polls, the law prohibits the publication or dissemination, by any means, the results of the polls or surveys that are intended to reveal the electoral preferences of the citizens.³²

The Propaganda by telephone on behalf of the Ecologist Green Party of Mexico and advertising by the PRI occupied the most of the complaint reports during election day.³³ In addition, Ana Mendizábal, a student residing in Cancún, Mexico received a text message days before the presidential election. She said that “she was sent a text message days before the presidential elections. It said to vote for the Ecologist Green Party and the Institutional Revolutionary Party.”³⁴ She proceeded to file a complaint online since it was what the news channels had been suggesting to do if any illegal activity were to be seen.

Additionally, the Article 41 of The Mexican Constitution states that:

“durante el tiempo que comprendan las campañas electorales federales y locales y hasta la conclusión de la respectiva jornada comicial, deberá suspenderse la difusión en los medios de comunicación social de toda propaganda gubernamental, tanto de los poderes federales y estatales, como de los municipios, órganos de gobierno del Distrito Federal, sus delegaciones y cualquier otro ente público. Las únicas excepciones a lo anterior serán las campañas de información de las autoridades electorales, las relativas a servicios educativos y de salud, o las necesarias para la protección civil en casos de emergencia.”³⁵ During the time of federal election campaigns and local and until the conclusion of the respective election day, shall cease broadcasting on media of all government propaganda, both federal and state authorities, such as municipalities, governing bodies of the Federal District, their delegations and any other public entity. The only exceptions to this will be the information campaigns of electoral authorities, relating to

³¹ Ana Velázquez. Podcast Audio. 22 Nov. 2013.

³² *Instituto Federal Electoral, IFE.* Web. 11 July 2013. <<http://www.ine.mx/archivos3/portal/historico/contenido/Elecciones/>>

³³ Renata Sánchez. “En el DF se reportaron más incidentes durante la jornada electoral.” *CNN* 7 Jul. 2012. Web. 21 Aug. 2013. <<http://mexico.cnn.com/nacional/2012/07/01/hay-mas-reportes-de-incidentes-electorales-en-el-df-dicen-observadores>>

³⁴ Ana Mendizábal. Podcast Audio. 1 Dec. 2013.

³⁵ “Constitución política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos.” *Cámara de Diputados.* Web. 30 Oct. 2013 <<http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/htm/1.htm>>

education and health services, or necessary for civil protection in emergencies.³⁶

The constitution strictly prohibits the use of propaganda during elections nonetheless on July 1, 2012, Juan Solís, a university student residing in Mexico City, stated that

On the day of the election I received a text message telling me to vote for the PRI Candidates. I knew this violated the Mexican Constitution; therefore, I reported it to the FEPADE (in charge of seeking electoral justice and its duty is to investigate, and prosecute election offenses) but they ignored it. I felt powerless for not being able to do more.³⁷

Subsequently, these illegal tactics utilized by the PRI were a valid reason to nullify the wining of the Enrique Peña Nieto. However, the investigations towards these activities were left unsolved and the PRI was never penalized for their acts. It also demonstrates that the PRI government has remained faithful to its tactics of corruption in order to win the elections in a fraudulent way.

Conclusion

The 2006 and 2012 presidential elections have demonstrated that a faux democracy exists in Mexico since it is evident that both PAN and PRI have used illegal tactics in order to win the past elections. It also shows that only a group of people controls the Mexico, such as monopolies and elites. Even though the Mexican government is known to work hand and hand with corruption it is evident that they are not willing to change their ways. With this kind of government the frustration of the Mexican people has become evident and their expectation towards a better government has vanished. It is almost a guarantee that for the next presidential elections those who seek to stay in power may use illegal strategies. In order to eliminate part of the corruption, foreign entities should monitor the next presidential elections. This would not only reduce the fraudulent activities but also it will help the Mexican people obtain a true democracy.

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³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Juan Solís. Podcast Audio. 1 Dec. 2013.

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