

The Different Left Forces And the 2011 and 2012 Elections

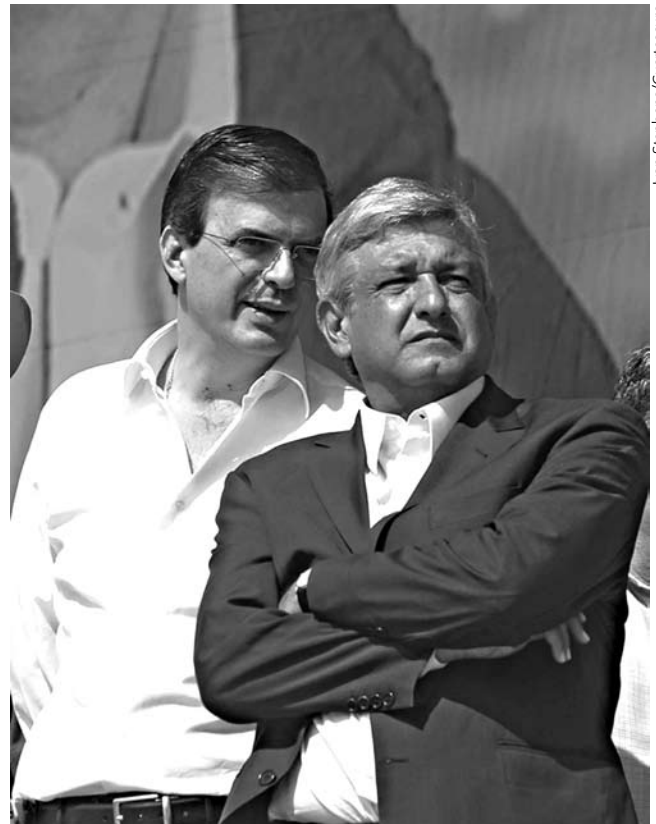
Pablo Cabañas Díaz*

The 2012 race for the presidency began in 2011. This took the form of a dispute in which clear national, long-term projects were nowhere in evidence. Quite to the contrary, what have come to the fore are personal ambitions and party interests. According to the *Latinobarómetro 2010 Report*, in Mexico, only 28 percent of citizens polled are very satisfied with democracy; 21 percent think the country is being governed for the good of the people; and 65 percent think government decisions are made to ensure privileges for the few.¹

Senator Gustavo Madero, president-elect of the National Action Party (PAN), represents a weak leadership. In the fight for the top spot in his party, Madero beat federal Deputy Roberto Gil, who presumably had President Felipe Calderón's total backing and support. That support was real, which is why last January 7, Gil once again came into the spotlight as Calderón's new political operative in the presidential race. Gil is currently his new private secretary, with functions that go way beyond the scope of his job description.

The election of former Coahuila Governor Humberto Moreira as president of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), and Cristina Díaz as its new general secretary, reveals the nucleus of the forces preparing to launch the presidential candidacy of Enrique Peña Nieto, current governor of the State of Mexico. Moreira's close relationship with Elba Esther Gordillo, head of the powerful National Educational Workers Union (SNTE), is another expression of the coalition being forged on the road to 2012. In Coahuila, the new PRI leader's brother will be running for governor, while former Governor Enrique Martínez heads up the PRI in the State of Mexico.

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The two frontrunners for a left coalition presidential candidacy, Marcelo Ebrard (left) and Andrés Manuel López Obrador (right).

The Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) Political Commission has agreed to elect the new national leadership March 19, 2011, but the renovation of the party will last until September. Its changes in leadership will impose an extremely complex, wearing, internally confrontational dynamic, since the dispute inside the institutional left has centered on controlling the PRD. We should remember that on July 21, 2008, its National Guarantees Commission voided the March 16, 2008 internal elections when it discovered there had been irregularities in more than 20 percent of polling booths.

The recent election in Guerrero merely confirmed one thing: if other parties want to beat the PRI, they will only be able to do it by running a former PRI member. To be clear, "only the PRI can beat the PRI."

Six states hold gubernatorial elections this year: Guerrero, Southern Baja California, Michoacán, Coahuila, the State of Mexico, and Nayarit. In the first three, the PRD is in office, and in the last three, the PRI. Guerrero, South Baja California, and Michoacán are of capital importance for the PRD since they are places where it has been in office for up to two consecutive terms. The first of these elections was in Guerrero, where the "Guerrero Unites Us" alliance candidate Ángel Aguirre won, supported by the PRD. This election merely confirmed one thing: if other parties want to beat the PRI, they will only be able to do it by running a former PRI member. To be clear, "only the PRI can beat the PRI." The second round of elections was for governor, the state Congress, and mayors in South Baja California. Important changes came about: after 12 years of PRD administrations, the incumbent party dropped to third place in the voters' preferences, and the PAN will now sit in the governor's office.

The last strategic election for the PRD will be November 13 in Michoacán, where the results are up in the air; it is not clear whether the citizenry will attribute the grave problem of insecurity to the federal or the state government.

Today, the PRD is electorally weakened, representing only 12 percent of the national vote, while in the 2006 presidential elections, its candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador won 14 683 000 votes. In four years, this party lost 44 percent of the sympathizers who voted for it in 2006. Also, in the 2009 elections in Hidalgo, Oaxaca, Quintana Roo, Tlaxcala, and Veracruz, the PRD came in third, and in Puebla and Tamaulipas, fourth.

In 2009, the PRD dropped to being the third largest caucus in the Chamber of Deputies, winning only 39 districts and 32 more seats by proportional representation. Historically, the PRD's average vote for federal deputies by district, from 1991 to 2010, was 18 percent, but its average for midterm elections of deputies by district in 1991, 1997, and 2003 is 16.56 percent.

In 2009, the PRD lost important districts, mainly in Mexico City's Federal District, the State of Mexico, Guerrero,

Oaxaca, Veracruz, Hidalgo, Tabasco, Morelos, and Tlaxcala. This meant that it stopped governing eight million Mexicans as the result of municipal elections, most notably in the State of Mexico municipalities of Ecatepec, Nezahualcóyotl, Chalco, Valle de Chalco, Ixtapaluca, Texcoco, and Los Reyes la Paz, among others.

The PRD, with its coalition with the Labor Party (PT) and Convergence called the Broad Progressive Front (FAP), has limited potential. This is because the votes predicted for the smaller organizations individually range from 2 to 2.5 percent. However, if this were not sufficient for gauging each party's electoral strength, we can use another parameter: the 2003 midterm elections, in which each ran its own candidates and the results were that the PRD got 17.6 percent of the vote, the PT 2.4 percent, and convergence 2.2 percent.

On July 4, 2010, elections were held in 14 states. In 12, the governor's office was up for election, and of these, nine were won by the PRI, with PAN-PRD coalitions winning three states: Oaxaca, Puebla, and Sinaloa. The PRI wrested Aguascalientes and Tlaxcala away from the PAN and Zacatecas away from the PRD, where it had governed since 1998. The PAN-PRD electoral alliance won in Puebla, Sinaloa and South Baja California, also capturing 167 city governments and 13 local districts from the PRI in these states, where it had been the majority. In 2010, the PRI won 49.5 percent of all the seats up for election. Although it kept its place as the country's largest political force, the PRI was not able to repeat the victories it had achieved in almost all states in previous years.

Both the PAN and the PRD won positions where they had previously had no presence. In Oaxaca, for example, where the PAN had headed up only seven municipalities before, it won 56 as part of the coalition; and, after having no deputies at all by district vote, it now has nine. In Sinaloa and Durango, where the PRI had predominated, the PAN and the PRD will jointly govern 18 municipalities. The PAN lost the governorships in Aguascalientes and Tlaxcala, and the municipalities it had governed in Baja California.

While the PRI maintained its 19 governor's seats, its distribution changed: it won three small states (Aguascalientes, Tlaxcala, and Zacatecas), with a total of 3.5 million inhabitants, with voters' rolls of 2.6 million and an overall budget for 2010 of Mex\$150 million. In contrast, the states it lost (Oaxaca, Puebla, and Sinaloa) total 11.4 million inhabitants, voter rolls of 8.3 million, and a combined budget of Mex\$117.61 billion.²

Split voting —voting for one party in one race and a different one in another race in the same balloting— did not mean a transfer of PRD votes to the PRI. In fact, a phenomenon seen in the 2009 and 2010 elections was the migration of votes from the PAN to the PRI. The latter's vote count in the 2009 federal elections (15 518 000) was 3 870 303 more than its total in the 2006 race for federal deputies; this last number is approximately the number of votes lost by the PAN in 2009, whose count then came to 4 235 935.

For the elections for federal deputies, the following table illustrates this situation, comparing the number of votes for the PRD, PT, and Convergence in 2003 and 2009.

Party	Vote Count by Year	
	2003	2009
PRD	4 694 365	4 164 000
PT	640 724	1 216 237
Convergence	602 392	808 764

Source: Developed by the author.

If this tendency continues in Mexico City's Federal District, the consequences will be greater in 2012. While the majority of the vote continues to favor the PRD, there has been a change in the party's trajectory since 1997, the year when the capital's citizens were first allowed to elect a local government. This makes it possible to predict that 2012 will bring some changes.

On this note, before continuing, it is necessary to clarify something. The largest chunk of PRD votes nationwide comes from and depends on the Federal District and the metropolitan area, including part of the State of Mexico. Given this, for years the PAN has done everything within its power to snatch electoral space away from the PRD in the country's capital. But every attempt has failed. However, in 2009, some changes were visible. In the local Federal District elections, the PAN won three of the 16 borough races (Miguel Hidalgo, Benito Juárez, and Cuajimalpa), one more than in previous years, and nine local deputyships, when previously it had only had four.

For its part, the PRD won 12 boroughs, two less than three years before, with one going to the PT (Iztapalapa). In the Federal District's Legislative Assembly, Mexico's main left party kept 30 of the 66 seats, four fewer than it won in 2006.

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An alliance between the PRD and the PT and convergence does not have an impact on the national electoral panorama, since, together, they display weakness. This can be seen in their performance since 1997 —when Convergence did not run, since it only got its official registration as a political party in 1999— when the PT got 756 436 votes, compared to the PRD's 7 519 914 (the PRI came out of the balloting with 11 445 852, and the PAN 7 792 290). In 2003, the vote count was PT, 642 290 (2.4 percent of the total); Convergence, 605 156 (2.2 percent); PRD, 4 707 009 (17.6 percent); PAN, 8 219 649 (30.7 percent); and PRI, 6 196 171 (23.1 percent).

In the 2000 and 2006 elections for federal deputies, the results were not published separately since the PRD, PT, and Convergence ran in an alliance. In 2000, it was called Alliance for Mexico, and included the participation of the now-defunct Social Alliance Party and the Party of the Nationalist Society; in 2006, it was called the "For the Good of All" coalition. Given those two initiatives, in 2000, the coalition obtained 6 984 126 votes compared to the PAN's 14 321 975 and the PRI's 13 800 145. In 2006, the coalition netted 12 013 364 votes nationwide, compared to the PAN's 13 845 121, and the 11 676 585 ballots in favor of the PRI in coalition with the Green Ecologist Party of Mexico (PVEM).

In 2009, when Jesús Ortega was heading up the PRD, it dropped down to the third largest legislative caucus. With this drop, Manuel Camacho Solís, the coordinator of Dialogue for the Reconstruction of Mexico (DIA),³ proposed to Ortega that the only way out was an electoral alliance with the PAN, their ideological opponent, which the PRD had accused of stealing the 2006 presidential election. This alliance got strong media support from Televisa and Televisión Azteca, the companies that control the media in Mexico. However, in the July 2010 balloting, the real victory went to Elba Esther Gordillo, whose New Alliance Party (Panal) won nine of the 12 governorships up for election. Her strategy was to make state-level alliances with practically all the parties (PRI, PVEM, PAN, PRD, PT, and Convergence).

Gordillo won 38 percent of the mayor's seats and 48.7 percent of the deputy's seats in 11 states. The crisis of the PAN and the PRD strengthened the Panal, which is looking good as the third electoral force in Mexico in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

In contrast with the Panal, of the 12 governor's seats up for election, the entire left (PRD-PT-Convergence) only won three, allied with the PAN. The only state the left had governed alone was Zacatecas, but, as I mentioned, it lost it and also made a very bad showing in terms of number of votes. The broad alliance won 33.8 percent of the mayor's seats in 13 states, and only 23.3 percent of the deputy's seats in 14.

Manuel Camacho's contribution was that the PAN became a state-level governing party not through a defeat of the PRD, but with its support. This was obvious in the July 4, 2010 elections, in which 12 governors were elected. All the polls pointed to the PRI as the indisputable frontrunner; there was even talk of "the whole enchilada," the PRI making a clean sweep. The option was clear: if the PRD and the PAN had not allied with each other, the PRI would have defeated them.

In 2010, voter turnout increased and no-shows dropped. Manuel Camacho's hypothesis that none of the opposition parties could beat the PRI if they ran separately was proved true. The PAN and the PRD won in alliance running former PRI members as candidates and thanks to their operations. For the movement headed by Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the PRD-PAN-PT alliance is the PRD's "legimization" of Felipe Calderón as president of Mexico.⁴ **MM**

NOTES

¹ See <http://www.latinobarometro.org/>. [Editor's Note.]

² See the figures published by Mexico City daily *Reforma*, July 6, 2010.

³ On December 8, 2009, the Labor Party (PT), Convergence, and the Party of the Democratic Revolution formalized the Dialogue for the Reconstruction of Mexico (DIA), headed by Manuel Camacho Solís. Camacho Solís explained this alliance saying that the unity of the three parties had been lost in the 2009 federal elections, and that the DIA aimed to have the three parties run together in the 2011 governor's race in Oaxaca and the 2012 presidential race.

⁴ See Israel Covarrubias, "El PRI como orilla de la democracia. Después de las elecciones de 2010 en México," *Nueva sociedad* 230 (November-December 2010), pp. 4-13.

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