

Application of the decision theory in the political-electoral field

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Abstract: the object of the present article is to discuss from the theory of electoral behavior, which was originally created and used to explain the behavior of American electors, its possible application for the Mexican case, as for long time Mexican electors seemed to behave in an exceptional manner, since election after election a single party was victorious. After analyzing some answers for the Mexican case I examine from some surveys' results, how the behavior of Mexican elector is explained.

Key words: electoral behavior, vote, opinion, surveys, Mexican elections.

Resumen: El objeto del presente artículo es discutir a partir de la teoría del comportamiento electoral, la cual originalmente fue creada y empleada para explicar la conducta de los electores estadounidenses, su posible aplicación para el caso mexicano; pues por mucho tiempo los electores en México parecían comportarse de una forma excepcional, ya que elección tras elección un partido resultaba victorioso. Después de analizar algunas respuestas que se han dado al caso mexicano examino, con base en el resultado de algunas encuestas, cómo se explica la conducta del elector mexicano.

Palabras clave: comportamiento electoral, voto, opinión, encuestas, elecciones mexicanas.

Introduction

It could seem a contradiction to talk about vote as an act of election, for the act of voting is intrinsically linked to a process that we call election. Despite this, the conditions under which subjects make their elections are not so redundant, giving place to a set of theories that state that the decision making process in an individual sense is something totally wrong. And if the consideration that individuals only respond to determinations that are beyond their will, in the case of electoral processes there are sets of decisions which the voter makes in order to chose between candidate “A”, “B” or “C”. At the same time one individual makes this decision, other millions make decisions as well. Therefore, the decision of a single person does not modify at all or does not add anything to the decisions made by a series of people, which means that individual elections appear to be fatuous.

Despite the previous argument about the uselessness of thinking the construction of models of ideal subjects that make decisions motivated by the desire or the need to possess this or that good, it is equally wrong to think the possibility that the decision of a subject is not biased by a set of factors either real or fictitious, as well as the possibility that the decisions voters make, among the other make, may finally trigger any kind of result in their private sphere or, that such decision may have any consequence in the society where they live.

Taking into consideration the petty possibilities that individuals have to modify the sense, the direction of the events in society; the societies and institutions that shape it are, obviously, constituted by individuals, who explained through the theory of action, or situated as integrated to a class, or if we consider them part of a structuring structure, they will finally perform acts, actions, which may trigger results that might be somehow explained, and will establish the possibility that something or someone is responsible for what happened. In this regard, without appealing to a mystic will, to a supernatural force, it is necessary to look for participants of processes and establish some reasons that may justify their occurrence.

That is one of the aims of this work. To ask ourselves about the possibility of the decision making process, in which individuals take part, and look for a certain kind of theory that allows its explanation. The second objective is found in a exclusive realm of the electoral decision making. What are the factors that may help us to explain this action that is becoming more important every day in a new democracy, such as the Mexican?

The theories of action and decision and their influence on the vote

What are the strings that pull some members of a society to take part in periodical election processes that take place in modern democracies?

There is a series of approaches; one of them is Lipset's (1993). This author states that in more integrated democracies, i.e. in those in which the economical, political, social and cultural differences among their members are less, a more homogeneous society, there are conditions for the electoral participation. Whereas in a society where there are more social differences and a low level of integration among the different social groups, the possibilities of participation decrease. As a example he mentions the levels of participation in elections in regard to women, country people, black people and poor in the case of the United States (*op. cit.*: 159). Another author, Logroye (1988), who in conjunction with Lipset, insists on the social determinations as social classes, education and income, but at the same time he mentions another important fact to formulate our voting decision, the different capacity to access the information, flairs and understanding of each of the members of a society in particular. As this author proposes:

According to the most spread image, the act of voting is the "minimal" way of participation; it is the one that embraces the higher number of individuals, the one that supposedly provides the less controversial measure of their interest in politics, the one that is considered as the periodical expression of the opinions and preferences of the citizens. The election posses a high value as praised fundament of democracy, a decisive moment in which all members of a political community choose their representatives and the general orientation of the policies that will affect them. A source of legitimacy vindicated by the leaders , from this point of view it can only be seen as a result of a set of decisions rationally motivated and that all citizens are supposedly able to make:

the election among programs and candidates whose respective merits would be evaluated by each one in the light of their concept of what is desirable. An election between policies that are judged according to their objectives, credibility and opportunity (op. cit.: 344).

The author states that the central issue in the democratic process and that of the elections is opinion, projects, the needs and desires of the voters in contrast to the proposals of the parties and their candidates. Democracy becomes very difficult when its participants have no or little information, given that this fact will difficult their possibilities of performance at an election. The functioning of a democratic system supposes the exercise of opinion, provided that it is possible to inform this opinion. Beyond the number of means of information, the access to them by the majority shows the unequal capacity among members of a society to gain access to that information, considering that knowing about the programs and proposals of the political parties and their candidates is linked to the interest the members of a society have in regard these topics and issues.

Based on this, the question is not to which extent the members of large social groups know the main problems that affect them, for it is clear that in Mexico, any result of a poll (Kuschick, 2002) shows that most of the population knows the problems that afflict them, as it would be: poverty, unemployment, low wages, etc., the difference lies in the kind of decisions that must be made in order to solve those problems. These considerations provide us with the real problem that our research states: the problem of a democracy as the Mexican and the possibilities of higher or lower levels of political participation are linked to the levels of trust and credibility that the citizens have on the political institutions. On the other hand, it also focuses on the kind of strategies and rationale that the different social groups and their members provide to solve their basic problems so as to establish or not the possibility of taking part in the political processes.

In such manner that participation or abstention, the fact of rejecting the possibility of taking part and therefore not casting vote, is not linked to a simple process of moral character that can be corrected with higher civic education, but on the contrary, with the opinion citizens have in regard to the kind of democracy that there is and the higher or lower levels of credibility

that they have in that process promotes more possibilities of solving their own situation and problems. A situation that affects and involves both: individuals and groups.

Not disregarding the value and importance of the paradigms of both, the ones from the authors and those of Lipset and Lagroye and their functional-structural base, they all propose that citizens vote when they are more integrated to their social groups and exercise certain kind of social functions and when they are less integrated they vote less. This is neither totally true nor totally false, because one can see that in general terms, some women (with specific characteristics) exercise less voting than some men. Despite this, such situation cannot be generalized to all women, young people, unemployed etc; for several members of these groups cast their vote.

General and determinist theories depict generalized behavior and prove their hypothesis through added data. Elections give rise to the problem of generalization, an argument that some exceptional cases can refute. This situation constrains us to look for more casuistry explanations, as well as to use probabilistic models. By using these models, we demolish the theory of generalized behavior, as it would be to state that “all men” or, as Lipset does by stating that the members of the working class (*op. cit.*: 220) vote for the Democrat party or to say the members of the better-off class vote for the Republican Party.

Nowadays, the opinion and exit polls allow higher levels of disintegration through statistical data, although, as it will be seen later, empiric information *per se* does not substitute the generalization of hypothesis and explanatory schemata.

Should one be against the previous postulates, given the fact that it would make us accept that the decision of an individual is determined by its insertion to a bigger group, be it a social class or a reference group, gender, age group. As we said, it is not possible to accept this proposal entirely; despite this it is not possible to refuse it, which places us in the same situation, whereupon we have to look for a certain kind of alternative. One of them is found in the fact that beyond individuals' class, gender, reference group, etcetera, individuals use some kind of schema to make a

decision, which could be based on the personal interests of the individual involved. Such schemata of individual stripe may be stated based on rational action (Weber, 1987). This author proposes a modality of action (which he calls “rational instrumental action”). But, what does rationality mean from this perspective? According to Downs (1957), the fact of being rational rests on the modality under which individuals accept decisions: in this terms, subjects will be rational when they are able to weigh up the relationship between costs and benefits they expect to obtain from the action they have made, which means that they will not perform any action if they believe that no benefit will be received. Nevertheless, Weber himself states another type of rational action: rational action motivated by values (Weber, 1987); under this modality, the actors decide to be imbued with values; these values are commonly ideal or the “ought to be”. The president represents that “ought to be”; for we think that she or he must make true what we search after as an ideal be it capacity, responsibility or honesty. In this sense, one can state that a considerable part of the constituents choose one or another candidate according to their values. Candidates represent or signify ideals, as it is the case of Vicente Fox in the 2000 election when he represented a “change” or Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador in 2006 who represented the image of a charismatic leader that was able eradicate poverty. Therefore, in the electoral decision, electors decide between continuity or change of the government on duty and the person that is going to govern them.

Another scholar who uses a rationalizing metaphor to explain the behavior of the constituents is Popkin (1998). According to this author, voters chose under the principle of low information level. Popkin, believes that it is impossible to use the principles of rationality proposed by Downs. Subjects make decisions from the moment they have a set of alternatives, and the most important factor is that it should posses the largest amount of information regarding the possible options. This will allow them to hierarchize the options, ranking from the most important to that with less relevance, and from that to hierarchization a decision will be made. For Popkin, Downs’ model is empirically unfeasible, for, in real life, individuals decide without having all information and without gathering all data. Since actors will hierarchize decisions according to the level of significance they have, and

political nature decisions are not always meaningful for ordinary people, nor have, in most cases, transcendence in their daily life, they will be made based in the formerly mentioned principle, a rationality with low information level that will be called a visceral election that describes the practical thought that people use in regard to government and politics.

According to Popkin (1988), “the voter is an interventionist and the vote is a reasoned investment on the common good, made with costly and imperfect information and under conditions of uncertainty” (*op. cit.*: p. 56).

However, two more conceptions can be added to these approaches. One has a high sociological content; for it states that the voting decision is linked to reference groups and to the definitions of the elector in terms of their socioeconomic, cultural, religious, educative and occupational conditions. This conception was stated in the University of Columbia (1960). The other conception, with higher psychological content, is that from the school of Michigan (1964). It proposes that the voting decision is defined by the political and party sympathy (*partisanship*), the image that the voters have of the different candidates, and by the “issues”, that the parties and their candidates propose in the realm of the political campaign.

After revising these different kinds of theories in regard to the electoral behavior; which could be useful in order to support the explanation of vote in the Mexican elections?

In general terms, voting in Mexico cannot be different from the casting a ballot in other latitudes. Nevertheless, Mexican electors lived several years under a single-party government. And many electoral processes that were carried out before 2000 election, as it is the case of the elections of 1988, have been under suspicion. Hence, for many analysts Mexican’s electoral behavior was closely linked to what the party in the government did or did not do.

In the Electoral Dictionary (2002), the authors propose the following theory to explain Mexican vote:

1. Economic and cultural development induces political development expressed as plurality and political competences.
2. Urbanization and development have transformed political culture; they have broken the cooperative nets that supported the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Thereby, more urbanization represents declination in the number of votes in favor of that party. Urban population tends to vote more for the opposition, in the case of the rural; the vote is mostly in favor of PRI. Urban vote has a higher specific gravity than the rural that represents the result of the control and strength of PRI.
3. The most important variable of the bases of the parties is the rural-urban factor, the so called green vote, as well as other socioeconomic variables such as marginalization and illiteracy. In accordance to this, PRI's vote is based on the rural population, self-employed, unemployed and illiterate, who they control through spoils system and by a tendency to defend their own interest in prejudice of that of other groups. So that when these mechanisms fail in attracting people, as it is in the case of middle classes, elections are more dynamic.
4. There is a minority with citizen culture and a great majority with parochial and subject cultures, which produces an identity crisis that disrupts development and alienates population from the government, which acts in accordance to the existing authoritarian tendencies.
5. There is a political culture which is little rational or irrational that becomes a traditional participation. This participation is not discursive and when it is discursive, it is uncritical and accepts and repeats the official credo, in open inconsistency among the criticism to the government and the political preferences.
[...]
10. As soon as the economic conditions –inflation and income- aggravate, the vote goes to the left hoping for an improvement: this is the way the electorate punishes or rewards the performance of the government. PRI's votes in 1994 depended on the positive evaluation of the economy. People that approve the presidential performance voted for PRI, even though it is not clear if this happens because they belong to PRI or because they support the president. If the elector is not satisfied with the governmental performance, at the moment

of voting they consider the probabilities of ousting the government, as it happened in 2000 elections, in which retrospective and tactical votes were weighty (Martínez and Salcedo, 2002: 96-97).

Bibliography that studies the Mexican case, apart from being scarce, contains pieces of work in which generalizations are made, as it is the case of the one quoted above. In it, hypotheses are made without empirical support, and at the same time they report some of the postulates used, for example, in the United States to explain the behavior of those electors. Nevertheless, such theory is despised later and the authors seek sanctuary in the particularisms and in the easy generalizations in regard to the Mexican elector; who is described as an individual that is motivated only by structural conditions and that makes use of the retrospective or the tactical votes (¿?).

One can state that in order to explain the electoral behavior of the Mexican, hypothetical theories are important, of course, but they have to be supported on empirical information that starts to run smoothly nowadays. Hence we have to consider the Mexican voter beyond particularisms that would make us define them and thier society as an entity without greater relationship with other social groups. If this was true, not only would it be impossible to explain the electoral behavior of the Mexican, but other kind of behaviors: economic or moral.

Even so, and with this in mind, this seems to be impossible. The economical actors make decisions motivated by the relationships between costs and benefits that a specific action would provide them, in the same way that strategical terms actors have to estimate the possible actions and decisions that are different in order to make theirs. Consequently, the electoral behavior of the Mexican who for more than seven decades voted predominantly for a single political institute might have its explanation in the results obtained and in the lack of alternatives.

Based on this, one can propose the first set of hypothesis that guides the present study: the voting decision and all the decisions made among subjects are determined by the amount of options. When there are more options, electors have to use a higher amount of strategies; less options result in fewer strategies. In this respect, Mexicans cannot be different from

other kind of electors at the moment of deciding the direction and the sense of their vote. What we state is, in the past, not only did electors lacked many options apart from PRI, but the perception that PRI was going to win was also there.

The electoral reforms started in 1977, the creation of an independent electoral authority, i.e. the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE), that allows more competence among parties, equity and the option of political alternation and the economic crisis resulted in the electors voting for other political options.

Thus, the electoral behavior of Mexicans depends on the higher number of options that does not mean anything if these political options do not look for new political perspectives along with a decrease in the governing party's trust, in this case PRI, which may improve the social and economic conditions that emerged in the country during the mid-1980s.

If one refers to a relatively short period of time, for example elections in the last thirty years, one observes that between 1970 and 1988, the average of votes for PRI is 86%. From 1988, the year with highest competence level, PRI has a low threshold of 50% of the votes. One can assert that elections after 1988 result in a real debacle for the Institutional Revolutionary, due to the fact that their average decreases more, for in the case of the presidential election of 2000, for example, they received only 36% of the votes. This number is similar to that obtained in the 2003 elections in which an alliance with the Green Ecologist Party represented 36.7% of the votes, and considering that in the 2006 election they fell to the third position.

Considering that we are not able to establish electoral tendencies neither from PRI nor from its opponents given the fact that the number of competitive electoral processes in the federal domain is scarce, we will use some results of opinion polls and a set of circumstances, hoping that in the long term, as it is the case of the United States of America, we will see a higher electoral regularity that provides each party a portion of the votes, that modifies according to the particular circumstances. In the Mexican case, until last elections the circumstances have been very important given the lack of regularities. For in some cases, the 2000 election and in that of

Chart I
Results of presidential elections in Mexico from 1970 to 2006

Years	Candidates and parties	Votes	%
1970	Total	13,915,963	100.00
	Luis Echeverría A. (PRI, PPS, PARM)	11,970,893	86.02
	Efraín González Morfín (PAN)	1,945,070	13.98
1976	Total	16,727,993	100.00
	José López Portillo(PRI,PPS,PARM)	16,727,993	100.00
1982	Total	23,592,888	100.00
	Miguel de la Madrid(PRI,PPS,PARM)	16,748,006	70.99
	Pablo Emilio Madero (PAN)	3,700,000	15.68
	Arnoldo Martínez Verdugo (PSUM)	821,995	3.48
	Ignacio González Gollás (PDM)	433,886	1.85
	Rosario Ibarra de Piedra (PST)	416,448	1.76
	Cándido Díaz Cerecedo (PST)	342,005	1.45
	Manuel Moreno Sánchez (PSD)	48,413	.20
1988	Total	19,191,982	100.00
	Carlos Salinas de Gortari (PRI)	9,687,929	50.47
	Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas(PARM,PPS,PMS)	5,929,585	30.97
	Manuel J. Clouthier (PAN)	3,208,584	16.71
	Gumersindo Magaña (PDM)	190,891	1.00
	Rosario Ibarra de Piedra (PRT)	74,857	.40
1994	Total	34,549,283	100.00
	Ernesto Zedillo P.de León (PRI)	17,336,325	50.18
	Diego Fernández de Cevallos(PAN)	9,222,899	26.69

P.T.O.

	Cuahtémoc Cárdenas S. (PRD)	5,901,557	17.08
	Cecilia Soto (PT)	975,356	2.82
	Jorge González Torres (PVEM)	330,381	.96
	Other	764,429	2.21
2000	Total	37,603,923	100.00
	Vicente Fox Quesada(PAN, PVEM)	15,988,740	42.52
	Francisco Labastida O. (PRI)	13,576,385	36.10
	Cuahtémoc Cárdenas S. (PRD, PT)	6,259,048	16.64
	Gilberto Rincón Gallardo (PDS)	592,075	1.57
2006	Total	37,603,923	100.00
	Felipe Calderón Hinojosa (PAN)	14,916,927	35.89
	Roberto Madrazo Pintado (Cp.M)	9,237,000	22.23
	Andrés M. López Obrador (CPBdT)	14,683,096	35.33
	Roberto Campa (PANAL)	397,550	0.95
	Patricia Mercado (Alternativa)	1,124,280	2.70
	Valid votes	40,657,057	
	Void votes	900,373	2.16
	Votes for unregistered candidates	298,204	0.71
	Voter turnout	41,557,430	100.00

Data collected from IFE and TRIFE by the author.

1995, the economic crisis influenced the results of the election. 2006 election is atypical as well, because despite the fact that there was not an economic crisis, there was a set of circumstances in the competence among three political parties. Mainly, the possibility that one party from the left wing could win and that PRI could be displaced with almost no possibilities of

victory. Other special circumstances of the 2006 election were the removal of the political rights of the former Mexico City Mayor Andrés Manuel López Obrador, as well as the early morning press conferences that became factors that promote this public figure in a significant electoral option.

Based on this, one can say that in the case of Mexico the circumstances, such as the good functioning of the economy and the perception of the government performance, the characteristics and the personality of the candidates, the citizen perception of the government acts, their higher or lower levels of involvement in corruption acts define the possibilities and chances of the different political parties and their candidates. Not disregarding the fact that media take part and influence the electoral results, but I would not like to incorporate this important variable in the present work.

If, as established before, there are less possibilities of defining electors as an indeterminate collective or prisoner of some deterministic elements as the previous quotation stated, how can we explain the behavior of the voters in Mexico?

In my opinion some paths have been explored, as Maria de las Heras (1999) mentions, there is an “inertial” vote and another one that is defined as “circumstance” (*op. cit.*: 69). Despite approving this model in a partial way only, it is clear that there is a vote that is faithful to a political party. This vote is called the “hard vote” or, in terms of electoral marketing, “brand loyalty” (Silva and Salcedo, 1997:37). This first kind of vote exemplifies the fact that when electors empathize with a political party, they do not require many arguments to make their decision; political parties that are opposite to this can do little to modify the vote intention. The inertial vote could be explained in Weberian terms (1987) as a kind of emotional and traditional action: “3) *affective*, especially emotive that is determined by the affections and current emotional states, and 4) *traditional*: that is determined by the deep-rooted custom” (*op. cit.*: 1987: 20).

Action theory is useful to understand the first modality of electoral explanation, for it states that the voter’s decision is not made based on rational considerations. Actors decide considering an equation –means/ends– in which they aim at maximizing their benefits and minimizing costs.

De la Heras' model is the following, taking into consideration the pre-electoral research that was made before the 1991 election.

We could not explain vote intentions of a great part of the electorate by only considering circumstantial questions in which elections were involved. Some interviewees said that they would vote for the National Action Party (PAN) or for the Democratic Revolution Party (PRD), but they thought that PRI's candidate was the best or that the campaign was better.

Another issue that became clear during those studies is that there was not an important correlation between the parties' propaganda and the vote intentions of the interviewees. There were some that did not know the propaganda of the party they were going to vote for and there were others that, despite knowing the propaganda of a specific party and believe that that propaganda was the best and most suitable for the circumstances they were not going to vote for it.

According to the research results we obtained, the number of electors that had the intention of voting for a political party because they empathized with it, had few variations in the course of campaigns. On the contrary, the number of electors that were going to vote for a party, but did not empathized with it, varied in a considerable way during the course of the campaigns (op. cit.: 70).

As we stated previously and the proposals of De las Heras confirm, the Mexican voters do not behave differently compared to voters of other latitudes. They make decisions in a similar way as the authors of *American Voter* (Campbell *et al.*, 1964) state in contrast to the perspective of deciding in a first moment according to their electoral identity, this means, if voters empathize with a specific political party they will vote for the party and campaign of their preference. Competitor's proposals won't be significant, given the fact that swing voters¹ are removed from the above mentioned model (De las Heras, *op. cit.*: 84), because it integrates them to a category

¹The so called "swing voters" problem or independent voters is not only a problem in Mexico, one could say that in Mexico it has been disregarded, for the Mexican elections have been competitive for a short period of time and the statistical series, exit-polls are a relatively recent phenomenon, which means that the non-empathized voters tend to increase and it is very important to generate a hypothesis about their behavior, but it is not the most important aim of this article, and as it can be seen in De las Heras', she prefers to eliminate them.

that is suggested by the model. Nevertheless, further research of the Michigan (1964) group, could state that in addition to the constituents' decision on voting for their favorite political party, electors can decide according to other conditions, such as the candidate's image or the issues proposed in the campaigns.

According to the author there are two different kinds of electors. Those electors that vote based on their predilection, sympathy in a constant way for a political organization. These voters are called "inertial" voters. The rest are occasional voters, whose vote would be determined by the "circumstance". These and other classifications can be established. The central issue has nothing to do with the classification, but with the modality that will be used at the moment of carrying out polls and drafting the questions that will allow identifying the different electoral segments. Therefore, to be able to differentiate the electors in different segments is an important factor, for the theoretical mechanism that is used will establish the methodological criteria in order to differentiate the different kinds of electors.

Fiorina (1986) explained that in the case of the U.S voters, the standard criteria to differentiate the electors is how satisfied they are with the government, such criteria looks like the proposal that was made by Downs (1957), when he states a rational schema in order to understand the electors, because for him, they make rational decisions, i.e. they are maximizers.

Electors see decisions as mechanisms of government choosing, they make their decisions in order to maximize their utility and in order to do so, they consider the political and ideological stances and the past performances of the political parties in order to gain a measure of the level of responsibility and realism (credibility) that they may have (Luque, 1996: 99).

This schema based on the poll results was used by some researchers that analyzed Mexican presidential elections that took place before 2000, when PRI was still in a dominant situation. In that study, Domínguez (1998) referred to the 1988 elections in the following way:

In this chapter we aim to display the vote intentions of the Mexican electors as they can be observed in the results of the polls, they are better explained in terms of the judgments that the voters make in regard to the party in the government, and the preferences that they have had in previous elections.

[...] We aim to explain the “model” of the Mexican elector in two steps. Electors do not decide firstly based on the judgment they make about the party in the government. In addition to this judgment, they also make differentiations by topics, economic perspectives, social benefits that allow electors to decide between opposition parties that are found in the political arena. A potential realignment can happen, but it can only occur based on the judgment that is made of the party in power and of the characteristics of their presidential candidate (op. cit.: 78).

The model Dominguez proposes explained the performance of the Mexican electors in 1988, despite this, did this performance continue in the 1994 election? Vote decision is made considering the “retrospective” vision on the side of the electors, they decide to favor the government (in that case PRI’s government) based on their opinion about the operation of the country’s economy and the state of their personal economy.

Tables 1 and 2 are based on polls that were carried out in Mexico before the 1994 election and they show the answers of the electors regarding their perception of the state of the economy at that time and their approval or disapproval levels of Salinas’ administration.

Among the fundamental arguments for the vote’s decision, we find that 67% of the PRI voters, in 1994, casted their vote in approval of the government of Salinas, voters in favor of Fernandez de Cevallos 42% disapprove him partially and 40% disapprove him totally, and almost in the same way the ones who voted in favor of Cardenas (39%). Another element in the vote’s decision is in the elements that we will provide later, but they are linked to the sympathy for the political party (partisanship), image and characteristics of the candidates, which were elements that we found again in the Mexican election of 2000.

In both, the work from De las Heras (1999) and that from Dominguez (1998) there are common elements that depict Mexican voters as similar to the U.S. voters. For example, in the U.S. theories about elector behavior are

Table 1
Perception of the state of the economy and vote intention in 1994 (%)

With Salinas the economy*:	Zedillo (PRI)	F. Cevallos (PAN)	Cárdenas (PRD)
has improved	68	21	7
is the same	42	34	18
has worsened	20	39	34
With Salinas your economy:			
has improved	71	18	8
is the same	47	31	16
has worsened	21	42	29
The next president must:			
continue with it	75	17	5
change it	38	35	21

Source: *op. cit.*: 204.

*The questions are "What's your opinion of the economic situation during Carlos Salinas de Gortari's government?" "How much have the economic conditions of your family changed during Salinas de Gortari government?" "In regard to the economic policy of Salinas' government, the next president should:"

Table 2
**Perception of the viability of PRI
 and the election of the candidate in 1994 (%)**

	Zedillo (PRI)	F. Cevallos (PAN)	Cárdenas (PRD)
Approve / disapproves of Salinas' administration			
Approves	67	29	8
Partly approves	34	42	17
Disapproves	14	40	39
Voted for in 1988:			
Salinas	75	16	6
Clouthier	15	73	7
Cárdenas	9	20	64
When did you decide to vote for preferred candidate /party			
You have always voted for the same party	65	19	12
You vote for the candidate you know the most about	40	32	21
After the debate	29	50	15
In recent days	39	28	23
Voted in the same you did, why?			
You like the party	58	24	14
You like the candidate	45	31	17
You do not like the rest	49	28	17

Source: *op. cit.*: 206.

based on continuous electoral processes, this has helped to establish certain regularity in the construction of behavioral theories in the electors. Whereas in Mexico, one can say that the electoral processes do not display a significative continuity yet, for the 2000 elections, which will be analyzed hereunder, show a break in the PRI tradition, as the main winner of the Mexican elections. Does this mean that the rule of action of the Mexicans has changed?

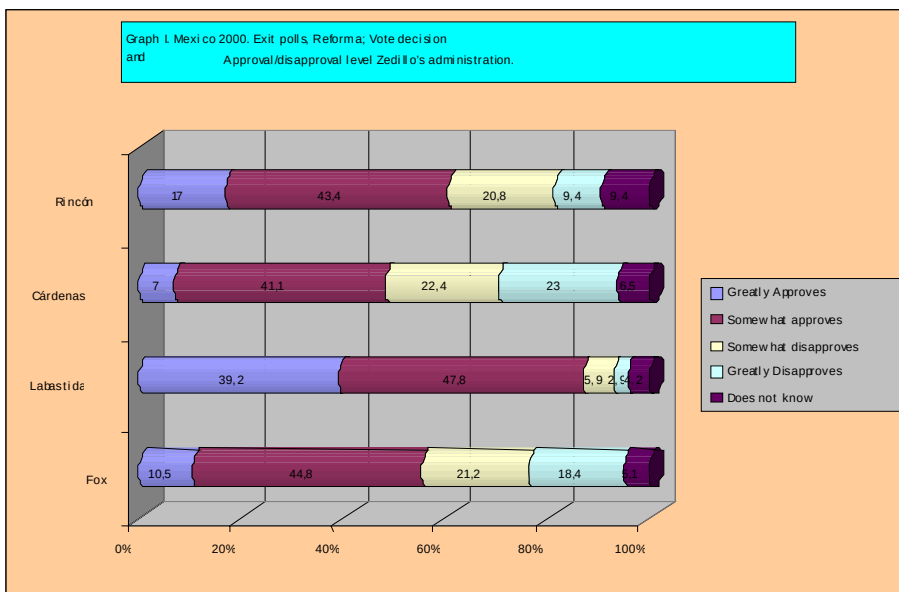
On the very contrary, one can state that the same inertia has been kept, given the fact that in the 2000 election no negative judgment of Zedillo's government was found. Voters instead considered the performance of PRI's governments as a whole and their inability to avoid disastrous results in the economy of the population, especially the 1994 economic crisis, the famous "December mistake", as former president Carlos Salinas de Gortari baptized it.

Nonetheless, do factors that explain the performance of the electors in previous elections and their rejection to PRI and their candidate still explain the behavior of the electors? When examining the results of an exit poll, that was carried out by the Reforma newspaper (ITAM, 2004), one can see to what extent the factors such as approval/disapproval levels of Zedillo's government, among others, may become significant when explaining the July 6th election.

The main hypothesis behind Dominguez and McCann's work (1988) is that in the case of Mexicans, the most important factor to explain the acting of the electors was focused on the acceptance levels and rejection to the government on duty. In the 1994 election, the acceptance and approval levels of Salinas' government were high, for there was not an economic crisis; nevertheless, slightly more than 60% of the Fernandez de Cevallos' electors approved in some way the PRI government. On the contrary, 40% of the PAN electors disapproved the PRI government. This might mean, as we will see later, that this variable itself does not determine the whole behavior of the electors, considering that many of them, mainly the ones supporting a specific party, may judge rationally the government of a different party and their predilection in a satisfactory manner, but they do not vote for that party. This variable is not explanatory in casual sense, i.e. approving

a government of a party does not necessarily imply voting for it, but it is more probable for it happen. Although there are other factors that may interfere modifying the voting decision.

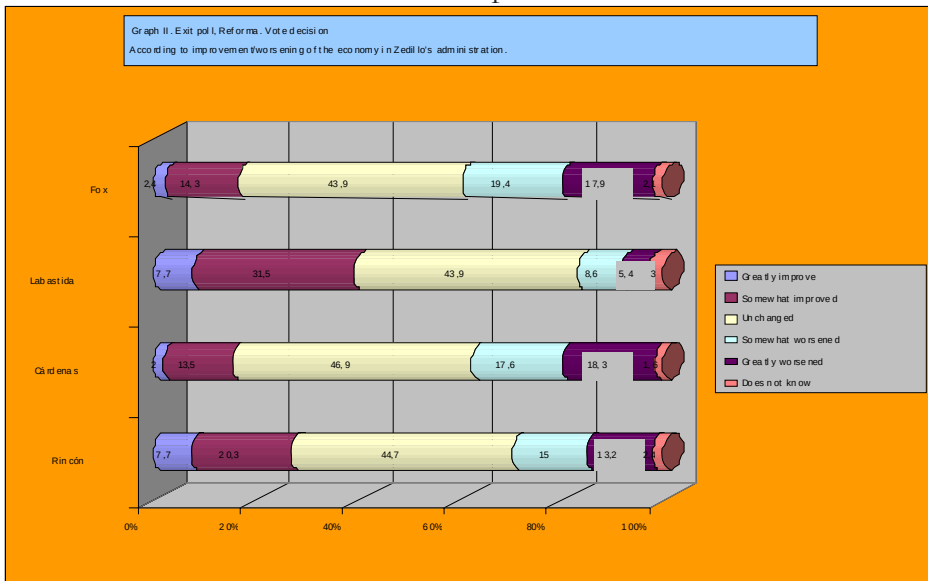
Graph 1



Source: ITAM, 2004

When analyzing Graph 1, one notices what was previously stated, 55.3% of the Fox's electors approved Zedillo's government, whereas 39.6% of the ones that claimed having voted for him did not approve said government. Despite the fact that this amount is enough to guarantee the victory of PAN's candidate, approving a government, in this case that of Zedillo, is not enough to vote for the PRI candidate, i.e. a great part of the Fox's electors approved Zedillo's government, but despite this, they voted against Labastida, PRI's candidate. Therefore one can state the hypothesis that the "approval/disapproval" factor of a government is not a reliable indicator to predict the victory of a candidate in an election.

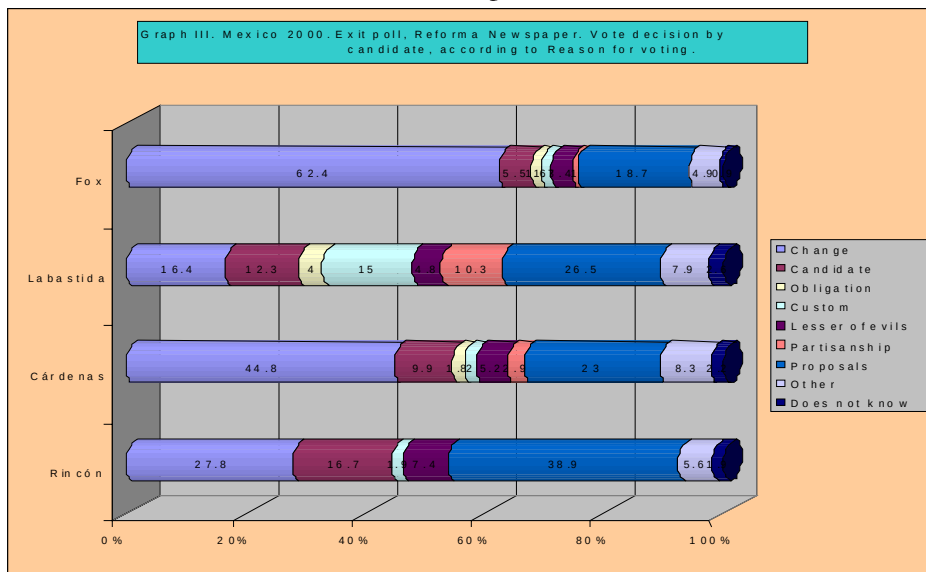
Graph 2



Source; ITAM, 2004.

However, Labastida's voters, for example, proved the hypothesis, considering that 9 out of 10 electors approved PRI's government, which proves what was previously mentioned, despite the fact that opponents approve the government in duty, the political sympathy, i.e. the identity with a party or candidate, deter from voting in favor of a party that is different to theirs, albeit believing that the party on duty do it well.

Graph 3

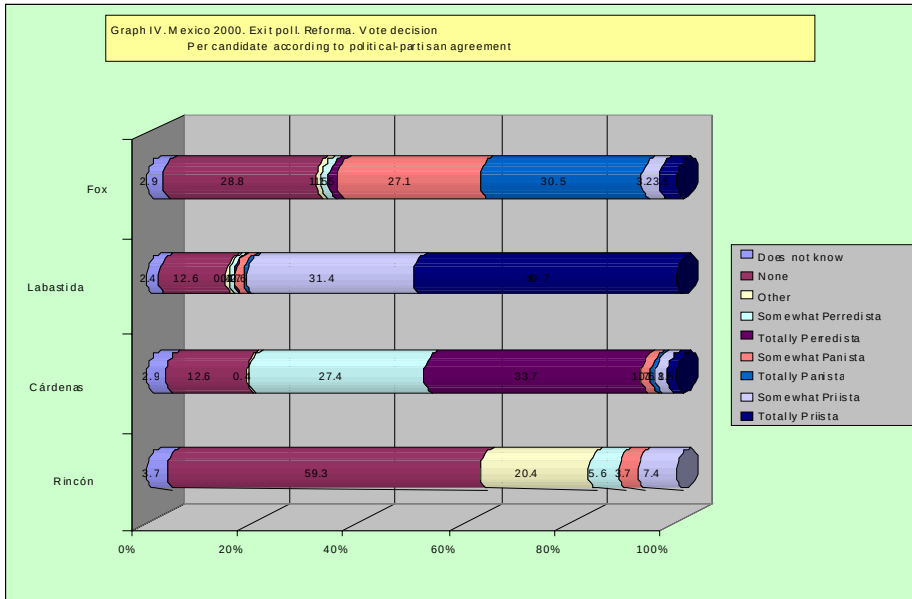


Source ITAM, 2004.

Graph II shows some elements to explain the intention of vote for the opposition. 37.3% of the Fox's voters perceived that the situation during Zedillo's government had "worsened in some way" or "seriously worsened", whereas 44% of his voters did not notice changes in the situation of the economy, for them, it was the same.

Graph III adds another factor that probably derives from the T.V. slogans that were used during the political campaign and, mainly in Fox's campaign, since 62.3% of their electors voted motivated by the "change". This is, although the PRI government was not too bad, in the same way they perceive that although the economy did not show positive signs, they hoped that with a change in the government the situation could change. Therefore, one of the main factors to explain vote for PAN's candidate is the level of trust, the credibility that it gains and the smear of PRI and their candidate.

Graph 4



Source ITAM, 2004

Graph 4 displays how each candidate obtained support from the electors, Fox especially. In this case it is the political and party sympathy of the voters that define electors as sympathizers of one of the political institutes. In the case of Fox, 57.6% of his voters come from those that define themselves as “very PANist” and “kind of PANist”, and slightly more than 30% of their vote has its origin among the electors that do not define their political preference, which means that Fox managed to obtain votes from PRI and PRD followers, but mainly from those who did not have a defined political and party sympathy. This is the so called undecided or independent vote. In the case of Labastida, practically 80% of his votes come from those that define themselves as “very PRIist” of “kind of PRIist”. The same happens with Cardenas, although the difference is that PRD followers represent a higher amount. In the case of Rincon Gallardo, 60% of his voters came from electors that did not identify themselves with any political organization; therefore the 2000 election was central to conquer the independent vote.

Conclusion

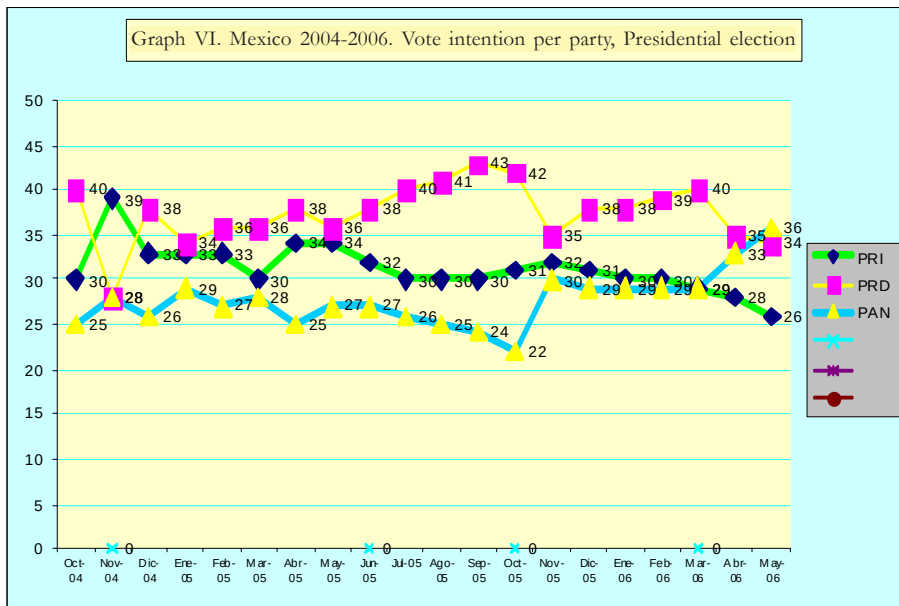
From the analysis of the results of some surveys carried out before and after the two last presidential elections, it can be established that the electoral behavior of the Mexicans can be studied based on some theoretical paradigms that have spread in the international arena. This means that the Mexican electors decide using similar schemata to the ones used by the electors of other countries, above all those from U.S. As it can be seen in the first electoral polls carried out in Mexico before the 1988 elections and the ones from 1994. The main argument of the voters to make a decision was the opinion regarding the economic status of the country and the way they perceived the government on duty. If they believed that the government performed well or bad, as well as the political and party sympathy, because up to 1994, PRI kept a high level of captive vote, which means that electors decide firstly if the party on duty performed well. Should this be their perception, they vote for it, if it is not, they vote for the opposition.

In the case of the 2000 election, the exit poll that was carried out by Reforma newspaper, as well as the ones quoted before, propose that one of the most important factors for the electors to make a decision is the perception of the possibility of change that implied the candidacy of Fox, therefore in this election the possibility of changing the governor had more weight than the positive valuation that Zedillo's administration had.

We can conclude that a positive valuation of the performance of a government is not enough for the electors, but as it happened in 2000 in the expectations of the electors the images of the candidate from the opposition were stronger than their valuation regarding the PRI government. In 2000 it was more important to change than maintain, therefore, our theory, although having many elements of circumstantial kind, can establish that the fundamental ingredients of the decision for voting is not only rational (instrumental, strategical) based upon an cost/benefit schema. On the contrary, electors consider the political and party sympathy, the image that they have of the candidates and that of the political parties, their prestige levels and smear they loss of face they have in the public opinion. These were circumstances that played an important role in the 2006 elections, in the same way that the image the media promote on a daily basis and mainly

on T.V., which by its capacity to schedule issues makes it possible to promote a person or destroy their image, as it was seen recently in the case of Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador who had a good image, i.e. he was identified and projected in the public imaginary as a good politician, someone who was apt, honest and who supported people with low income. This perception that did not exist in the case of Montiel, has been the fundamental element in media projection of Lopez Obrador, who was considered the candidate to be defeated in the elections. Nevertheless, as it happened in this last election, the positive image of Lopez Obrador was counteracted with a negative campaign, which depicted him as a “danger for Mexico”, at the same time compared him to Venezuela’s president, Hugo Chavez. This situation may have influenced some electors, for, as it can be seen in the results of some polls published in Mexico, the vote intention in favor of PRD decreased, at the same time that the vote intention in favor of the PAN candidate increased.

Graph 5



Source: El Cotidiano, num. 140, Nov-Dec., 2006.

To sum up, T.V. and media can change election processes, media are mainly information mechanisms, but they have also the possibility of influencing the information they provide, and create ethical and moral nuances. They also integrate elements that the public may not know, as it is the case of the denouncing and the corruption cases and scandals. These elements may influence the perception that the public has on an issue, and which has not enough information. Media can modify the public's attitude; this is indeed the goal of any advertising and propaganda campaign. In this sense, media can work as great modifier of the citizen perception and support the behavior of the electors in the electoral processes, as it was seen in the 2006 election, the decrease in the vote intention for the PRD candidate was directly linked to the negative campaign that was carried out against him, especially via T.V. spots. Therefore media are a central means to modify the intention of a voter who is not identified with a political party and who may also have scarce information; they do not make use of other sources, as newspapers and do not have great interest in the political activities. That is the reason why a little margin decided the winner of the last election. One may wonder, how can we prove in a positively way the influence of the media in the decision of the electors?

Even though the theory about the influence (Roda, 1989; Lazarsfeld *et al.*, 1964; Kapller, 1974; Iyengar and Zinder, 1993) of the media is extensive, in the case of concrete studies it is not so, for a great amount of the individuals do not recognize their influence, and in the case of electors, given their close relationship with the T.V., for it is usually a member of a family, they usually spend more time with it than with the other family members, that plays an important role in their decisions. In a poll that we carried out about 2006 elections, about 36% of the interviewees said that T.V. was "something" important for their defining who they were going to vote for. Although most electors did not find elements to vote for Felipe Calderon in his T.V. spots, in the case of Lopez Obrador approximately 20% of his electors remembered the well-known spot in which he said "Shut up, chachalaca"² that did not favor him.

² A tropical hen-like bird which utters a harsh cry; extending the meaning (derog.): a person who speaks excessively and noisily.

In conclusion, do electors make decisions based on costs and benefits obtained from the government? It is clear, by the amount of proposals that we have shown here, that although the topic of benefits is important, in the fear of possible, probable or imaginable spells, that, as the 2006 campaign managed to influence the image of one of the candidates, discouraging voters that were in his favor. Therefore, an elector only uses schemata of instrumental rationality, and do not, as we suppose, use the valorative rationality in weberian terms, for the image is constructed from the valorative vision of the “ought to be”. The candidate must be strong, charismatic, but if the media spots attack this image and sap the eyes of the electors, as it happened in 2006, “Lopez Obrador: a danger for Mexico”. Such situation not only proves the possibility of modifying the electoral results, as well as the attitude of many electors that decided to vote for a candidate that, despite the fact that he did not make them enthusiastic, at least did not generate fear. The media are a mechanism to modify the attitude of electors, when they provide information that they do not have or that casts doubt on the information they already have.

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