

# **Responsiveness of the Political System and Presidential Approval in the Mexican Transition to Democracy**

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People's perception of the responsiveness of the political system affects the way that voters approve the president and his policies. In an autocratic regime such as the PRI hegemony (89-00), citizens tend to focus their attention on the state of the economy and economic problems such as unemployment when they approve or reject the president and his policies. In the emerging Mexican democracy (00-06), political problems such as crime and corruption become important when voters examine the president's performance and policies.

## I Introduction

Presidential approval is one of the most studied topics in American politics.<sup>1</sup> The conventional wisdom has privileged analyses from the perspective of economic voting (Fiorina, 1981; MacKuen, Erikson, and Stimson, 1992; Clarke and Stewart, 1994; Kiewiet, 1983). Citizens make electoral decisions based on their perceptions of economic performance. Recent findings in comparative politics show that the political context affects the impact of economic performance on presidential approval and voters' support for policies (Arce, 2003; Duch, 2001; Hibbs, 1982; Powell and Whitten, 1993). In this paper, I argue that with the democratic transition in Mexico crime and corruption have become more important for presidential approval and people's support for the president's policies.

This paper is one of the novel studies that tests for the first time in comparative politics how people's perception of the responsiveness of the political system (an autocracy vs. an emerging democracy) affects the way that voters approve the president and his policies. I will test empirically that in an autocratic regime such as the PRI hegemony (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, in English, the Institutional Revolutionary Party) (89-00), citizens

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tend to focus their attention on the state of the economy and economic problems such as unemployment when they approve or reject the president and his policies. In an emerging democracy such as Mexico in the post-PRI era (01-06), political problems such as crime and corruption become important when voters examine the president's performance and policies. In an emerging democracy<sup>2</sup> citizens have the expectation that a president of the opposition is determined to address corruption and crime because he represents a political alternative.

## **II Theory**

Traditionally the perspective of economic voting has been dominant in the literature on presidential approval. From this approach, we can assume that voters punish incumbents who fail to deliver acceptable economic outcomes and reward governments that meet their expectations. However, some scholars in comparative politics have found that the effects of economic performance do not occur in a vacuum. People's perceptions of economic performance can be affected by the political context. In this section, I argue that this second perspective works better to explain presidential approval in Mexico from 1989 to 2006.

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<sup>2</sup> When I use the term "emerging democracies", I refer to the transition of some countries from nondemocratic to democratic political systems as a consequence of a wave of democratization occurred since 1974 (Huntington, 1991; Hagopian and Mainwaring ,2005)

The economic voting model argues that voters make electoral decisions based on their perceptions of economic performance. Citizens are willing to punish incumbents who fail to deliver good economic outcomes and reward governments that are able to meet people's expectations. The economic voting perspective can be subdivided into two main sub branches: aggregate-level approach and individual-level research.

According to the aggregate-level approach citizens can be treated as homogeneous on the whole. Using time-series analyses, scholars aggregate individual survey data at the national level. The main strength of the aggregate-level model is the opportunity to measure presidential approval across the time; however, scholars lose the opportunity to integrate into the models substantial differences (such as age, income and gender) that citizens use when they evaluate the president. Some of these studies pay attention to the debate between the prospective view of the voters (the electorate anticipates the economic future and rewards or punishes the president) when they make political decisions (Harold and Stewart, 1994) vs. the retrospective view that citizens use to evaluate the president (voters examine the previous results of the economy when they evaluate the president's performance) (Mackuen, Erikson, and Stimson, 1992)

The individual-level perspective focuses its attention on the differences among citizens, mainly, their perceptions about the general state of the economy, unemployment and inflation. Its main strength of this perspective is the opportunity to control for variables such as income, education, gender, and age.

Some of these studies underline the debate between the retrospective view of the voters when they evaluate the president (Fiorina, 1981; Key , 1966 ) vs. the prospective mind that leads people's approval (Page and Shapiro, 1992). Others researchers emphasize the debate between the sociotropic perspective (voters react to their perceptions of the national economy) (Miller and Miller, 1973; Kinder and Kiewiet, 1979; Kiewiet, 1983) vs. the pocketbook view (citizens' decisions are based on personal economic circumstances) that influence voters' decisions (Hibbs, 1979; Fiorina, 1981).

The main two problems of the economic voting models (aggregate and individual-level studies) are an overdependence on the U.S. case and the absence of a political context. The majority of these analyses focus their attention on the U.S. case and ignores that in other political contexts the impact of economic performance on approval can be affected by political variables. Does the economic performance have the same impact on presidential approval in a consolidated democracy than in an emerging democracy? Does the economic performance affect approval in the same proportion when people evaluate a left-wing president compared to a right-wing executive? In recent years scholars have attempted to answer the previous questions from the perspective of comparative politics.

Hibbs, Rivers and Vasilatos (1982) examine the political support for the incumbent party in the U.S., Great Britain and Germany from the late 1950s through the late 1970s. They find that voters hold "their" parties more

accountable for performance on the most salient dimension than they hold the opposition. Although this result is interesting, its main limitation is that this study only includes three countries. In a more ambitious research, a study that includes 19 industrialized democracies, Powell and Whitten (1993) argue that the ideological leaning of the incumbent matters for presidential approval. These scholars find that citizens are likely to hold right-wing governments to a higher standard on inflation and be less concerned with unemployment. The opposite is likely to be true for left-wing governments. The specific limitation of Powell and Whitten (1993) is that their study is focused on industrialized democracies. Given that industrialization and democratic consolidation are important factors in people's lives we should wonder whether the ideological image of the government matters for approval in new democracies or not.

Duch (2001) attempts to answer the previous question in a study that includes two new democracies, Hungary and Poland. He finds that when citizens become more informed about democratic processes they engage in higher levels of economic voting. Similarly, as they develop more trust in nascent democratic institutions, they are more likely to anticipate a responsive government and will be more likely to engage in economic voting.

In the same line of argumentation, the ideological image of the governments leads citizens to evaluate different presidents (left-wing vs. right-wing leaders) in different forms. Arce (2003) analyzes presidential approval in Peru from 1985 to 1997. He finds that Peruvian voters evaluate two different

presidents, Alan Garcia (1985-90) and Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000), in two different ways. Although Peruvians do not make any significant difference when they evaluate how Fujimori (who represents a right-wing government) and Garcia (who represents a left-wing government) manage inflation and unemployment, they assess in different ways the anti-guerrilla policies of Garcia and Fujimori. Arce's evidence (2003) suggests that high levels of guerrilla activity hurts a left-leaning government like Garcia's because voters attribute the violence to his "softness". In contrast, high levels of guerrilla activity do not hurt a right-leaning government like Fujimori's because voters are likely to see violence as rationalizing a hard-line stance.

In the Mexican case, the question is whether people's perception of the responsiveness of the political system (an autocracy vs. an emerging democracy) leads Mexican citizens to evaluate the president in two different forms, in one way during the hegemony of the PRI, and in another one in the post PRI era<sup>3</sup>. Are Mexican people more concerned about problems such as crime and corruption with the democratic transition? Do people consider that a government of the opposition has more capacity to solve problems such as corruption and crime in Mexico? Do people's perceptions about the economic performance matter more when a party with an authoritarian history such as that of the PRI is in power than when a party of the opposition arrives to the presidency?

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<sup>3</sup> I focus my attention on people's perception of the responsiveness of the political system because the data limitation to 88-00 only gives me the opportunity to analyze Right-Center and no Left PRI presidents.

The following sections of this paper are divided as follows. First, I provide background information on the Mexican transition to democracy. The discussion highlights key differences in the way that Vicente Fox (a *Panista* president) dealt with anti-corruption and anti-crime policies in contrast to the *Priista* regime. Second, I formulate the hypotheses of this research. Third, I describe the data and method that I use to analyze presidential approval in Mexico. Fourth, I develop some econometrics models to examine presidential approval. Fifth, I present the data and method that I employ to analyze citizens' support for the President's policies in Mexico. Sixth, I develop an econometric analysis of the previous section. Finally, I discuss the findings and implications of this paper.

### **III The Context**

A complex patron-client network of three main sectors (peasants, organized labors and the military) allowed the PRI to stay in power for more than 70 years in Mexico (from 1929 to 2000). It was a relationship based on an interchange of political support and the allocation of private benefits to peasants, labor workers and militaries.

The establishment of a nationwide confederation of peasants, the CNC (*Confederación Nacional Campesina*, in English, the National Peasant Confederation) and its incorporation into the official party in 1938 institutionalized the relationship between the state and those peasants who had

received land under the agrarian reform program after the 1910 Mexican Revolution. The CNC was the organization through which the peasant sector endorsed PRI candidates for public office and participates in electoral campaigns and other regime-supportive political activities. With the creation of the CTM (*Confederación de Trabajadores de México*, in English, the Confederation of Mexican Workers) in 1936, the PRI was able to control the main labor unions of Mexico. The leaders of the CTM offered political support to the PRI, and the members of the CTM received material payoffs and government subsidies. The military represented the “hard line” of *Priistas* governments, necessary in crisis situation, which took the form of armed repression of dissident groups (Cornelius and Craig, 1988).

However, in the 1970’s the Mexican political system sent signals that the patron-client network of the PRI lost “efficiency”. The allocation of land to peasants became scant (and the political costs of allocating good lands had increased dramatically), other labor unions began to compete with the CTM for the allocation of private benefits, and other sectors of the Mexican society demanded political alternatives. The use of coercion and illegal methods (electoral frauds) became more frequent as strategies of the PRI to stay in power. That was the case of the 1988 presidential elections.

After a very controversial electoral process, a pro-PRI federal electoral commission headed by the interior secretary (the president’s most important cabinet secretary, charged with keeping internal order) declared that Carlos

Salinas de Gortari was the new president of Mexico. After that election, burned ballots appeared floating in rivers by the hundreds. The mass media informed that the vote-tallying computers “mysteriously” crashed (Eisenstadt, 1988, p. 7). Manuel Bartlett, Minister of interior during the 1988 elections, admitted some years later that there had never been a computer system crash, as publicly claimed. Rather, Bartlett had shut down the vote tally on orders from President de la Madrid, to ensure a Salinas victory. Bartlett justified this action on grounds of “national security” (preserving political order). For a sector of the Mexican society the PRI began to represent a synonym of corruption and crime of the Mexican political system. This was one of the main points of Vicente Fox’s campaign in 2000: the eradication of corruption in the political arena that characterized the *Priista* era.

During the first debate among the presidential candidates in Mexico for the 2000 elections, as an answer to Francisco Labastida’s (candidate of the PRI) argument about Vicente Fox’s (candidate of the PAN) lack of character and seriousness to be president, Fox stated:

My dear Mr. Labastida, it is possible that I could get rid of my antics, but no one is going to take the dishonesty, bad governance and corruption away from you (*Priistas*).

When Fox took power as President of Mexico, he made two main public commitments to the Mexican society: to combat and eliminate corruption in all

the levels of government: federal, state, and local (*municipal*), and to reduce crime significantly from the streets of Mexico.

In relation to corruption, with the creation of the *Comisión Intersecretarial para la Transparencia y el Combate a la Corrupción en la Administración Pública Federal* ( in English, Inter Agency Commission for Transparency and Combating Corruption at the Federal Public Administration), Fox attempted to solve a very old problem in Mexico. The anti-corruption rhetoric of Fox was present not only in national but also in international forums. He was one of the main participants of the Tenth International Anti-Corruption Conference, in the Czech Republic, organized by Transparency International in October 11, 2001. The Agreements of the United Nations Convention against Corruption were signed in Merida, Yucatan, Mexico in December 9, 2003, with Fox as one of the main leaders presented of the conference. As President of Mexico, Vicente Fox was able to make a point about the problem of corruption in Mexico. With his anti-corruption policies, Fox attempted to distinguish his government to *Priista* administrations.

In relation to the second point (crime), after less than two months as President of Mexico, Vicente Fox declared a nationwide war on narcotics trafficking and organized crime, in January 2001, in Sinaloa, a Pacific coast state long considered the cradle of Mexico's extensive drug trade. Fox promised a complete overhaul of the nation's corrupt prison system and strict adherence to a Mexican Supreme Court. Since Fox' ascension to power, he wanted to emphasize different anti-crime policies than those of *Priista* regimes. After the first 50 days

since Fox took office, the authorities had arrested 489 people accused of involvement in drug trafficking and removed 15 federal agents in the northern state of Chihuahua. Fox also stated that his government had seized about twice as much cocaine marijuana and hallucinogenic drugs as was confiscated during the first 50 days of former President Ernesto Zedillo's administration in 1994. During his government, Fox developed plans and programs of anti-crime policies that allowed him to distinguish his government to the *Priista* regime. One of them was the program *México Seguro* (in English Safe Mexico). The program had as its main objectives combating delinquency and organized crime, and imposing severe sanctions on members of the public service who were involved in crime and corruption.

## IV Hypotheses

While the central focus of the paper is to assess the impact of corruption and crime on both presidential approval and citizens' support for the President's policies, it is also equally necessary to account for how economic evaluations and unemployment affect the form that citizens evaluate the president and his policies.

I expect both people's perceptions of the economy and the president's employment policies to be positively associated with presidential approval. Given the similar economic policies (privatization and other market liberalization) between Fox (00-06) and the *Priista* presidents (Carlos Salinas, 88-94, and Ernesto Zedillo, 94-00), I do not expect Mexican voters to evaluate the president in different ways during the hegemony of the PRI (89-00)<sup>4</sup> and in the post-PRI era (00-06). I expect that when citizens consider that the state of the economy is good, they reward the president. Moreover, when voters endorse the President's employment policies, they approve the president.

In contrast to the previous paragraph, I expect that people's perceptions of the anti-crime and anti-corruption policies of the president have a different impact on presidential approval. During the PRI hegemony, people's perceptions of the president's anti-crime and anti-corruption policies matter less for approval than in the emerging Mexican democracy. It is likely that Mexican voters do not believe that a *Priista* president wants to stop corruption and crime in Mexico. It is

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<sup>4</sup> I begin my analysis since 1989 because there are not surveys available before that date.

possible that people believe that the president is involved in the problem. In an emerging democratic regime, such as the post-PRI era, people's perceptions of the anti-crime and anti-corruption policies of the president are more important for approval. Mexican citizens, I hypothesize, expect that a president of the opposition is determined to address corruption and crime because he represents a political alternative.

Moreover, I hypothesize that the impact of political indicators, levels of crime and corruption, on anti-crime and anti-corruption policies, will be stronger in the post-PRI era than during the PRI hegemony. In the post-PRI era Mexican people have the expectations that the levels of crime and corruption can be reduced and their support for the president's policies are very sensitive to the variation of objective indicators of crime (number of convicted criminals in Mexico) and corruption (people's complaints against the civil service in Mexico). In contrast, during the PRI hegemony, people's expectations about the president's policies to address crime and corruption are low and not sensitive to the variation of objective indicators, related to these problems.

I do not expect that the impact of the level of unemployment on citizens' support for employment policies in the post-PRI era will be different from that of the PRI hegemony. During both periods Mexican voters have the expectations that the president's policies attempt to decrease unemployment. When the percentage of unemployment increases citizens' support for employment policies

decreases. A decrease in unemployment has a positive impact on Mexican voters' support for the employment policies implemented by the president.

## **V Presidential Approval: Data and Methods**

The thirty-three national surveys on which this study is based were organized by the Mexican Office of the Presidency and by the polling firm, *Parametria*. When the questionnaires were designed within the Presidency, the survey was conducted by *Opinion Profesional S.A. de C.V.*, a private company specializing in policy polling and focus groups<sup>5</sup>. Field workers were not informed of the client's identity; they identified themselves to respondents only as employees of *Opinion Profesional*. In the second case, questionnaires were designed and conducted by *Parametria*, a private and recognized firm specializing in policy polling in Mexico.

In total the surveys contain 81,544 household interviews, from March 1989 to November 2006, covering three different presidents (Carlos Salinas de Gortari, 1988-1994, Ernesto Zedillo, 1994-2000, both *Priista* presidents, and the *Panista* Vicente Fox, 2000-2006). Households were located for interviews through a multistage, stratified probability sampling procedure. At each

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<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, in my analysis it is not possible to control for a possible polling firm effect on presidential approval (Cohen, 2003). I created a dummy variable, called *Parametría*, to solve this problem, but because of the little variation (I have only two polling firms) the variable was dropped. However, a correlation test shows that presidential approval and the dummy variable *Parametría* are weakly correlated (.002). Therefore, the effect of polling firm on approval should be weak.

household, an interview of about 45-60 minutes was conducted with one respondent, selected at random, with about an equal proportion of men and women.

I develop some logit models that allow me to measure the probability that voters approve the president from 1989 to 2006 in Mexico. To measure presidential approval, my dependent variable, I will use a standard question in all the surveys. “On the whole, do you approve the way the President (Salinas, Zedillo or Fox) is handling his job as a president?” I will create a dummy variable (approve = 1; disapprove= 0). Some of the surveys have a wide range of options: people could respond “totally approve”, “partly approve”, “partly disapprove” and “totally disapprove”. Others have a narrow range options: “approve” or “disapprove”. I recoded the former surveys as the latter ones in order to increase my number of observations and develop the logit models.

To measure the explanatory variables, I use questions that asked respondents how the president is handling crime, corruption, and unemployment<sup>6</sup>. As control variables, I use partisanship and people’s perceptions of the economy, (variables that have been significant in previous studies). To measure partisanship, I examine whether respondents’ party matches the president’s party (1 when the voter belongs to the president’s party; 0 if he does not). To measure people’s perceptions of the economy, I use questions that asked about the respondents’ perceptions of the economy from different perspectives (sociotropic retrospective,

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<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, it is impossible to measure people’s perceptions about how the president is handling inflation, because this question was not asked in all the surveys.

pocketbook retrospective and pocketbook prospective<sup>7</sup>). Because it is possible to assume that during periods of democratic transition people have more access to information that can affect their perceptions about how the president is addressing corruption, crime and unemployment, I include the level of democracy in Mexico across the years based on the Freedom House Index. I also control for factors such as income, age, gender and education. Because the population may have different distributions in different time periods, I create dummy variables for all but one year. Table 1 shows the variables and their operationalization.

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<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, it is impossible to include the sociotropic prospective variable because the question necessary to measure this variable was not asked in all the surveys.

**Table 1: Explaining Presidential Approval (Individual Level): Variables**

<i>Concept</i>	<i>Question</i>	<i>Operationalization and Codification</i>
Dependent Variable: Presidential Approval <sup>8</sup>	Do you approve the way the president is handling his job?	(1 ) Approve (0) Disapprove
Independent Variables: People’s perceptions about how the President is handling crime	How do you evaluate the president’s ability to address crime?	(2) Very good (1) OK (0) Bad
People’s perceptions about how the President is handling corruption	How do you evaluate the president’s ability to address corruption?	(2) Very good (1) OK (0) Bad
People’s perceptions about how the President is handling unemployment	How do you evaluate the president’s ability to address unemployment?	(2) Very good (1) OK (0) Bad
Partisanship (matching the President’s party)	Do you consider yourself as a Panista, Priista, or Perredista?	Dummy Variable: 1 if the voter belongs to President’s party; 0 the voter does not, from 1989 to 2000, 1 if the voter is <i>Priista</i> ; from 2001 to 2006, 1 if the voter is <i>Panista</i> .
Pocketbook Retrospective	How is your personal economic situation compared with last year’s?	(2) Better (1) The same (0) Worse
Pocketbook Prospective	How do you think your personal economic situation will be next year?	(2) Better (1) The same (0) Worse
Sociotropic Retrospective	Compared with the last year’s economic situation, how do you evaluate Mexico’s current economic situation?	(2) Better (1) The same (0) Worse

<sup>8</sup> Some of the surveys have a wide range of options: people could respond “totally approve”, “partly approve”, “partly disapprove” and “totally disapprove”. Others have a narrow range options: “approve” or “disapprove”. I recoded the former surveys as the latter ones in order to increase my number of observations

**Table 1, Continued**

<i>Concept</i>	<i>Question</i>	<i>Operationalization and Codification</i>
Male (gender)	Which is your gender?	(1) Male (0) Female
Age	How old are you?	Three dummy variables. Age 1, from 26 to 40. Age 2, from 41 to 60. Age 3, from 61 or more .The base line group is the youngest people in the surveys, from 18 to 25.
Income	Which is your weekly minimum salary?	Two dummy variables. Income 1, people who have a salary from 1 minimum salary (MS) to 3 MS. Income 2, from 4 MS to 7 MS or more. The base line group is the people who have a salary lower than 1 MS.
Education	What year of school did you reach?	Four dummy variables. Education 1, people who have Elementary School. Education 2, people who have Junior High School. Education 3, people who have Senior High School. Education 4, people who have a Bachelor degree. The base line group is the people who do not have scholarly education
Freedom House Index (Level of democracy in Mexico by year)	It is an objective indicator	I use Freedom House index of political rights and civil liberties by year in Mexico (89-06). I add the level of political rights and civil liberties and divide the result by 2

## **VI Presidential Approval, Results**

Table 2 presents the results of the regression analysis. Table 2, Model 1 tests a general baseline model of presidential approval from 1989 to 2006 in Mexico (during the PRI hegemony and the post-PRI era). Consistent with the economic voting literature (Fiorina, 1981; Key, 1966; Page and Shapiro, 1992), the results indicate that over the period of study people's perceptions of unemployment and the state of the economy (pocket book prospective, pocket book retrospective, and sociotropic retrospective) have a significant impact on presidential approval. The four previously mentioned variables are significant at the 1% level. As I expected and consistent with the American politics literature (Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee, 1966; Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes, 1976) partisanship leads presidential approval. The variables related with the context of Mexican politics, people's perceptions of anti-crime and anti-corruption policies work well as predictors of presidential approval. Both are significant at the 1% level. Model 1 shows that some of the socio-demographic variables have power of explanation for presidential approval, but others do not. Education and Age are not significant. Income is significant, but in an unexpected direction according to the literature (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980). According to Model 1, the voters who have high income tend to punish the president. This finding could be explained in two complementary forms: first, wealthy citizens have more expectations about the president's performance and are more

demanding toward him. Second, wealthy voters have more to lose and monitor president's performance with more severity. According to Model 1, men approve the president more than women.

Models 2 and 3 allow me to divide my analysis into two main periods: presidential approval during the PRI hegemony (89-00) and the post-PRI era (01-06). Model 2 shows that during the PRI hegemony people's perceptions of anti-crime policies do not matter for approval. Consistent with the hypotheses, the evidence suggests that Mexican citizens do not believe that a *Priista* president can stop corruption, perhaps because the president is either involved in or a part of the problem. As it is possible to see in Model 3, people's perceptions of anti-crime policies become significant at the 1% level in the post-PRI era. This finding suggests that Mexican voters probably have expectations that a president of the opposition is determined to address crime because he is not part of the old political system. People's perceptions of anti corruption policies matter for approval in both models 2 and 3. However, this variable is significant in Model 2 (PRI hegemony) at the 5% level, and in model 3, at the 1% level. This finding indicates that although people's perceptions of the president's anti-corruption policies affect presidential approval in both periods (post-PRI era and the PRI hegemony), their impact is higher in a democratic regime than in an autocracy.

**Table 2, Effects of People's Perceptions of Anti Crime and Anti Corruption Policies on Presidential Approval in Mexico (1989-2006), Logit Models**

	<b>Model 1 (89-06)</b>	<b>Model 2 PRI Hegemony (89- 00)</b>	<b>Model 3 Post PRI Era (01-06)</b>
Perceptions of Anti Crime Policies	.25*** (.07)	.10 (.09)	.32*** (.10)
Perceptions of Anti Corruption Policies	.40*** (.06)	.15** (.07)	.79*** (.11)
Perceptions of Employment Policies	.62*** (.06)	.49*** (.08)	.58*** (.11)
Partisanship	2.12*** (.11)	2.28*** (.14)	1.93*** (.17)
Pocket Book Retrospective	.44*** (.06)	.48*** (.07)	.41*** (.10)
Pocket Book Prospective	.16*** (.05)	.17*** (.07)	.14* (.09)
Sociotropic Retrospective	.68*** (.06)	.75*** (.08)	.63*** (.10)
Income 1	-.37*** (.12)	.04 (.19)	-.61*** (.16)
Income 2	-.39*** (.13)	.17 (.19)	-.83*** (.18)
Education 1	.22 (.21)	.44 (.36)	.12 (.27)
Education 2	-.11 (.22)	.03 (.37)	-.19 (.28)

**Table 2, Continued**

	<b>Model 1 (89-06)</b>	<b>Model 2 (PRI Hegemony, 89-00)</b>	<b>Model 3 (Post PRI Era, 01-06)</b>
Education 3	-.20 (.22)	-.16 (.37)	-.13 (.29)
Education 4	-.29 (.23)	-.20 (.37)	-.33 (.31)
Male	-.14* (.08)	-.14 (.11)	-.13 (.12)
Age1	.08 (.10)	.19 (.13)	-.09 (.17)
Age2	-.08 (.11)	-.09 (.16)	-.09 (.18)
Age3	-.17 (.18)	-.28 (.26)	-.11 (.26)
Freedom House Index	.22*** (.07)	---	---
Constant	-2.2*** (.35)	-1.8*** (.39)	-2.45*** (.35)
Pseudo R2	.39	.36	.40
N	5355	3166	2189

\*p < .10, \*\* p < .05, \*\*\*p < .01.

Note: The dependent variables is presidential approval at the individual level. I include year dummies except for one year in the estimation of the models but not presented in the table. Some of them are significant.

Consistent with the economic voting literature (Fiorina, 1981; MacKuen, et al., 1992; Clarke and Stewart, 1994; Kiewiet, 1983) in Models 2 and 3, people's perceptions of employment policies and the state of the economy matter for approval in the PRI hegemony and in the post-PRI era. However, the main difference is that the coefficients of these variables are smaller in model 3 than in Model 2. Moreover, the variable pocket book prospective is significant at the 10 % level in Model 3, and significant at the 1% in Model 2. This result suggests that economic voting matters less for approval in the Mexican emerging democracy than in the *Priista* autocratic regime. Other finding of Models 2 and 3 is that partisanship is less powerful as a predictor of presidential approval in the emerging democracy of Mexico than in the PRI era. Finally, the socio-demographic variables are not very powerful explanations of presidential approval, except for income the rest of the socio-demographic variables are not significant.

The Freedom House Index is significant at the 1% level and has a positive impact on presidential approval (the index goes from 1 to 7 in which 1 means a high level of democracy and 7 a low level of democratic guarantees). Therefore, this finding suggests, in the Mexican case, people tend to approve the president more in an autocratic regime than in an incipient democracy. It is possible that with the democratic transition, Mexican people have more opportunities to know what is happening with the president and they begin to monitor the president's performance with more attention and severity.

To summarize, people's perceptions of anti-crime and anti-corruption policies matter more for presidential approval in an emerging democracy such as Mexico in the post-PRI era than in the *Priista* autocratic regime. Second, although economic voting leads presidential approval during the *Priista* hegemony and the post PRI era, people's perceptions of the state of the economy and unemployment policies have less impact on presidential approval in the incipient Mexican democracy than during the PRI hegemony.

## **VII Citizens' Support for President's Policies: Data and Methods**

I develop three ordered probit models to measure the probability that citizens approve the president's policies to address crime, corruption, and unemployment in Mexico from 1989 to 2006. I use the same thirty -three national surveys, described in previous pages, which were organized by the Mexican Office of the Presidency and by the polling firm, *Parametria*. I develop an ordered probit model for each policy. This means that I have three dependent variables: citizens' support for president's policies to reduce, respectively, levels of crime, corruption and unemployment.

To measure each one of my dependent variables, I use three questions that asked respondents how the president is handling, respectively, crime, corruption, and unemployment. The answers were coded as follows: 0 if, according to

people's perceptions, the president is doing a bad job; 1 if the president's job is acceptable, and 2 if the president's job is very good.

My key explanation variable in the three models is partisanship. I include the party ID of the three main political parties: PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party), PAN (National Action Party) and PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution). As controls, I use socio-demographic variables such as income, education, age, and gender. I also control for real factors that affect people's perceptions of the president's policies. To control anti-crime policies, I use the number of convicted criminals; for anti-corruption policies, the number of official complaints against the civil service; for employment policies, the percentage of unemployment in Mexico by year.

**Table 3: Explaining Citizens' Support for the President's Policies (Individual Level): Variables**

<i>Concept</i>	<i>Question</i>	<i>Operationalization and Codification</i>
<b>Dependent Variables</b>		
People's perceptions of anti-crime policies (Models 4A, 4B, and 4C)	How do you evaluate the president's policies to address crime?	(0) Bad (1) Acceptable (2) Very good
People's perceptions of anti-corruption policies (Models 5A, 5B, and 5C)	How do you evaluate the president's policies to address corruption?	(0) Bad (1) Acceptable (2) Very good
People's perceptions of employment policies (Models 6A, 6B, and 6C)	How do you evaluate the president's policies to address unemployment?	(0) Bad (1) Acceptable (2) Very good
<b>Independent Variables (Used in the three models)</b>		
Partisanship	How do you look at your self: <i>priista</i> , <i>panista</i> , or <i>perredista</i> ?	Three dummy variables: PRI ( <i>priistas</i> vs. no <i>priistas</i> ) PAN ( <i>panistas</i> vs. no <i>panistas</i> ) PRD ( <i>perredistas</i> vs. no <i>perredistas</i> ). The base line group is the Independents.
Income	Which is your weekly minimum salary?	Two dummy variables. Income 1, people who have a salary from 1 minimum salary (MS) to 3 MS. Income 2, from 4 MS to 7 MS or more. The base line group is the people who have a salary lower than 1 MS.
Education	What year school did your reach?	Four dummy variables. Education 1, people who have Elementary School. Education 2, people who have Junior High School. Education 3, people who have Senior High School. Education 4, people who have a Bachelor degree. The base line group is the people who do not have scholarly education.
Male (gender)	Mark your gender	Dummy variable (0) Female (1) Male
Age	How old are you?	Three dummy variables. Age 1, from 26 to 40. Age 2, from 41 to 60. Age 3, more than 61. The base line group is the youngest people in the surveys from 18 to 25.

**Table 3, Continued**

<i>Concept</i>	<i>Question</i>	<i>Operationalization and Codification</i>
<p><b>Objective Indicators</b></p> <p>Level of crime in Mexico (only Models 4A, 4B, and 4C)</p> <p>Level of corruption in Mexico (only Models 5A, 5B, and 5C)</p> <p>Level of unemployment in Mexico (only Models 6A, 6B, and 6C)</p>		<p>Number of convicted criminals in Mexico by year. The data comes from the Justice in Mexico Crime Statistics Database, Trans-Border Institute at the University of San Diego.</p> <p>People's complaints against the civil service in Mexico by year. The data comes from <i>Anexo Estadístico Sexto Informe de Gobierno 2006, Presidencia de la República.</i></p> <p>Percentage of the level of unemployment in Mexico by year. The data comes from <i>Anexo Estadístico Sexto Informe de Gobierno 2006, Presidencia de la República</i></p>

## VIII Citizens' Support for President's Policies, Results

Tables 4, 5 and 6 present the results of the regression analysis of citizens' support for the president's policies: anti-crime, anti-corruption, and employment policies.

Model 4A of Table 4 tests a general baseline model of citizens' support for the president's anti-crime policies from 1989 to 2006 in Mexico (during the PRI hegemony and the post-PRI era). Consistent with the American politics literature (Berelson, et al., 1966; Campbell, et al., 1976; Page and Shapiro, 1992), the results indicate that over the period of study party ID has a significant impact on voters' support for the president's policies (in this case anti-crime policies). As I hypothesized the variables PRI, PAN and PRD are significant and in the expected direction. Because in the analysis I include two *Priista* presidents (Carlos Salinas de Gortari, 88-94, Ernesto Zedillo, 94-00) and a *Panista* executive, Vicente Fox (00-06), it is logical that *Perredistas* reject strongly the president's anti-crime policies, while *Priistas* and *Panistas* approve the president's performance in addressing crime. Contrary to my expectations, the number of convicted criminals by year in Mexico is not significant in model 4A.

Models 4B and 4C allow me to divide my analysis into two main periods: Mexican voters' support for anti crime policies during the PRI hegemony (89-00) and the post PRI era (01-06). The results are as I hypothesized. Model 4B shows that *Priistas* approve anti-crime policies of a president that belongs to their party (Carlos Salinas, 88-94, and Ernesto Zedillo, 94-2000). Model 4C indicates that

*Panistas* approve Vicente Fox's anti-crime policies (01-06), a president who belongs to the PAN. *Perredistas*, congruent with the strong opposition of their party to the government, disapprove anti-crime policies when these come from either *Priista* presidents or a *Panista* executive. In contrast, Model 4B shows that when a *Panista* evaluates the president's anti-crime policies that comes from a *Priista* president, his party ID is not a good predictor of citizens' support for the president's policies. A similar story happens when a *Priista* evaluates a *Panista* president (Model 4C). Table 4 also shows that the number of convicted criminals by year is negatively associated with people's support for anti-crime policies. Although this variable is significant in Model 4B (during the PRI hegemony) and model 4C (in the post-PRI era), its impact is stronger (the triple) in the period of the Mexican emerging democracy. Consistent with my hypotheses, this finding suggests that the impact of the level of crime on voters' support for the president's anti-crime policies is bigger in the post-PRI era than in the *Priista* autocracy.

**Table 4: Citizens' Support for the President's Anti-Crime Policies, Ordered Probit Models**

	Model 4A (89-06)	Model 4B PRI Hegemony (89-00)	Model 4C Post PRI ERA (01-06)
PRI	.46*** (.01)	.48*** (.01)	-.10 (.07)
PAN	.05*** (.02)	.002 (.02)	.64*** (.07)
PRD	-.13*** (.02)	-.12*** (.02)	-.25*** (.08)
Income1	.04*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.02 (.06)
Income2	.06*** (.02)	.06*** (.01)	-.02 (.07)
Education1	.09*** (.02)	.09*** (.03)	.03 (.10)
Education2	.14*** (.03)	.15*** (.03)	-.05 (.11)
Education3	.13*** (.03)	.13*** (.03)	.09 (.11)
Education4	.05* (.03)	.05* (.03)	.005 (.13)
Male	.02** (.01)	.02** (.01)	-.002 (.05)
Age1	-.04*** (.01)	-.04*** (.01)	.02 (.06)
Age2	-.04*** (.01)	-.03** (.01)	-.07 (.07)

**Table 4, Continued**

	<b>Model 4A (89-06)</b>	<b>Model 4B PRI Hegemony (89-00)</b>	<b>Model 4C Post PRI ERA (01-06)</b>
Age3	-.07*** (.02)	-.07*** (.02)	.12 (.11)
Convicted Criminals	-4.63e-07 (9.24e-07)	-.00001*** (7.33e-07)	-.00003*** (7.06e-06)
N.	46,569	44,328	22,41
Pseudo R2	.04	.05	.06

\*p < .10, \*\*p < .05, \*\*\*p < .01.

Note: The dependent variable is citizens' support for the President's anti crime policies at the individual level. I include year dummies expect for one year in the estimation of the models but not presented in the table. Some of them are significant.

The socio-demographic variables do not allow me to make strong predictions about voters' perceptions of the president's anti-crime policies. In Models 4A and 4B income is positively associated with people's support for anti-crime policies at the 1% level. Wealthy people tend to approve the president's anti crime policies more than poor people. Education presents a similar story. More educated people reward the president's anti-crime policies more than less educated people. The variable age shows a different story. Age is negatively associated with citizens' support for anti-crime policies at the 1% level. Older people have a tendency to approve the president's anti crime policies less than

young people. However, the results of these variables are not significant in Model 4C.

In Table 5, it is possible to see that the story of the president's anti-corruption policies is similar to that of anti-crime policies.

Model 5A of Table 5 tests a general baseline model of citizens' support for the president's anti-corruption policies from 1989 to 2006 in Mexico. Consistent with the American politics literature (Berelson, et al., 1966; Campbell, et al., 1976; Fiorina, 1981; MacKuen, 1992), the results indicate that over the period of study party ID has a significant impact on voters' support for the president's policies (in this case anti-corruption policies). As I hypothesized the variables PRI, PAN and PRD are significant at the 1% level and in the expected direction. Because in the analysis I include two *Priista* presidents (Carlos Salinas de Gortari, 88-94, Ernesto Zedillo, 94-00) and a *Panista* Executive (Vicente Fox, 00-06), it is logical that *Perredistas* strongly reject the president's anti-corruption policies, and *Prisistas* and *Panistas* approve the president's performance in addressing corruption. Consistent with my expectations, the number of complaints against the civil service (proxy of corruption in Mexico) is significant at the 1% level.

Models 5B and 5C allow me to divide my analysis into two main periods: Mexican voters' support for anti-corruption policies during the PRI hegemony (89-00) and the post-PRI era (01-06). The results are as I hypothesized. Model 5B shows that *Priistas* approve anti-corruption policies of a president that belongs to

their party (Carlos Salinas, 88-94, and Ernesto Zedillo, 94-00). Model 5C indicates that *Panistas* approve Vicente Fox's anti-corruption policies (00-06), a *Panista* president. *Priistas* and *Perredistas* use their party ID to evaluate anti-corruption policies; however, their party IDs have different impacts when they examine policies of a president who belongs to a party different than theirs. *Perredistas* strongly reject the president's anti-corruption policies when these come from either *Priista* presidents (Salinas, 89-94, and Zedillo, 94-00) or a *Panista* executive (Fox, 00-06). *Priistas* disapprove Fox's anti-corruption policies but their rejection is less strong than that of *Perredistas*. Moreover, Model 5C shows that the variable PRI is significant at the 10% level; the variable PRD, at the 1% level.

Table 5 shows that the number of people's complaints against the civil service (proxy of corruption in Mexico) by year is associated with voters' support for anti-corruption policies. This variable is significant at the 1% level in the three models. However, in Model 5B this variable is negatively associated with citizens' support for anti-corruption policies; in Model 5C, positively associated. This finding is consistent with my hypothesis; objective indicators (in this case, level of corruption) have a different impact on people's support for the president's policies.

During the PRI hegemony, an increase in the number of complaints against the civil service is interpreted by people as a signal of the president's failure to address corruption; anti-corruption policies lose citizens' support. In

contrast, in the emerging Mexican democracy, an increase in the number of complaints against the civil service is interpreted by people as a signal of the president's effort to face corruption; anti-corruption policies gain voters' support.

**Table 5: Citizens' Support for the President's Anti-Corruption Policies, Ordered Probit Models**

	<b>Model 5A (89-06)</b>	<b>Model 5B PRI Hegemony (89-00)</b>	<b>Model 5C Post-PRI ERA (01-06)</b>
PRI	.52*** (.01)	.56*** (.01)	-.09* (.05)
PAN	.09*** (.02)	-.0001 (.02)	.62*** (.05)
PRD	-.22*** (.02)	-.19*** (.02)	-.38*** (.05)
Income1	.02* (.01)	.03** (.02)	-.04 (.04)
Income2	.07*** (.02)	.09*** (.02)	-.11** (.05)
Education1	.07*** (.02)	.08*** (.03)	-.02 (.07)
Education2	.05* (.02)	.07** (.03)	-.11 (.08)
Education3	.02 (.03)	.04 (.03)	-.09 (.08)
Education4	-.009 (.03)	.007 (.03)	-.19** (.09)

**Table 5, Continued**

	<b>Model 5A (89-06)</b>	<b>Model 5B PRI Hegemony (89-00)</b>	<b>Model 5C Post PRI ERA (01-06)</b>
Male	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.02 (.03)
Age1	-.008 (.01)	-.009 (.01)	.008 (.05)
Age2	-.04*** (.01)	.02* (.01)	-.15*** (.05)
Age3	-.06*** (.02)	-.03 (.02)	-.19*** (.07)
Complaints against the Public Service	-.02*** (.0006)	-.02*** (.0006)	.046*** (.007)
N.	42,684	38,678	4,006
Pseudo R2	.06	.07	.06

\*p < .10, \*\*p < .05, \*\*\*p < .01.

Note: The dependent variable is citizens' support for the President's anti corruption policies at the individual level. I include year dummies expect for one year in the estimation of the models but not presented in the table. Some of them are significant.

The results of socio-demographic variables do not allow me to make strong predictions about voters' support for the president's anti-corruption policies. Some of these variables (income, education and age) are significant, but gender (Male) is not. On the whole, age is negatively associated with citizens'

support for anti corruption policies. Older people tend to approve less the president's anti-corruption policies than young people. Education and income are significant in some models; however, sometimes their impact on anti corruption policies follows a positive direction and occasionally a negative one.

Table 6 shows the results of the regression analysis of president's employment policies.

Model 6A tests a general baseline model of citizens' support for the president's employment policies from 1989 to 2006 in Mexico. As in Table 4 and Table 5, party ID leads people's support for the president's policies (in this case employment policies). The variables PRI, PAN and PRD are significant at the 1% level and in the expected direction. Because the analysis includes two *Priista* presidents (Carlos Salinas and Ernesto Zedillo) and a *Panista* executive (Vicente Fox), it is logical that *Perredistas* reject strongly the president's employment policies, while *Priistas* and *Panistas* approve the president's performance in addressing unemployment. Consistent with my expectations, an increase in the percentage of unemployment in Mexico by year has a negative effect on citizens' support for employment policies and is significant at the 1% level.

**Table 6: Citizens' Support for the President's Employment Policies, Ordered Probit Models**

	<b>Model 6A (89-06)</b>	<b>Model 6B PRI Hegemony (89-00)</b>	<b>Model 6C Post PRI ERA (01-06)</b>
PRI	.62*** (.02)	.73*** (.02)	-.02 (.05)
PAN	.29*** (.02)	.17*** (.02)	.63*** (.05)
PRD	-.14*** (.02)	-.11*** (.03)	-.28*** (.05)
Income1	.09*** (.02)	.13*** (.02)	-.009 (.04)
Income2	.15*** (.02)	.19*** (.02)	-.03 (.05)
Education1	.03 (.03)	.04 (.04)	-.06 (.07)
Education2	.006 (.04)	.02 (.05)	-.07 (.08)
Education3	-.01 (.04)	-.004 (.04)	-.01 (.08)
Education4	.12*** (.04)	-.10** (.04)	-.26*** (.09)
Male	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.02)	.05* (.03)
Age1	-.06*** (.02)	-.07*** (.02)	-.04 (.05)
Age2	.14*** (.02)	-.13*** (.02)	-.18*** (.05)

Table 6, Continued

	Model 6A (89-06)	Model 6B PRI Hegemony (89-00)	Model 6C Post PRI ERA (01-06)
Age3	-.16*** (.03)	-.14*** (.04)	-.23*** (.07)
Percentage of Unemployment in Mexico by Year	-.18*** (.009)	-.19*** (.009)	-.0002 (.04)
N.	21,766	17,778	3,988
Pseudo R2	.05	.06	.05

\*p < .10, \*\*p < .05, \*\*\*p < .01.

Note: The dependent variable is citizens' support for the President's employment policies at the individual level. I include year dummies expect for one year in the estimation of the models but not presented in the table. Some of them are significant.

Models 6B and 6C allow me to divide my analysis into two main periods: Mexican voters' support for employment policies during the PRI hegemony (89-00) and the post PRI era (01-06). Model 6B shows that *Priistas* approve employment policies when another *Priista* is in office. Model 6C presents the complement of this story: *Priistas* reject employment policies when the president is a *Panista*. The partisanship of *Panistas* is more complex to understand. As I hypothesized *Panistas* approve employment policies when another *Panista* is in office (the president Vicente Fox). Contrary to my expectations, *Panistas*

approve employment policies when the president is a *Priista* (the variable PAN is significant at the 1% level in model 6B). The possible explanation is that Carlos Salinas (88-94) and Ernesto Zedillo (94-00), two *Priista* presidents, used an economic policy close to the *Panistas*' preferences: free market economy, free trade agreements with countries such as the U.S., liberalization and privatization. In contrast, *Perredistas* strongly reject the president's employment policies when these come from either *Priistas* presidents (Salinas, 89-94, and Zedillo, 94-00) or a *Panista* Executive (Fox, 00-06).

Table 6 shows that the variable unemployment is significant at the 1% level during the *Priista* hegemony (Model 6B), but it is not significant in the post-PRI era (Model 6C). A possible explanation is that objective indicators (in this case percentage of unemployment in Mexico by year) have a different impact on people's support for the president's policies in two different kinds of regimes: the *Priista* hegemony vs. the emerging Mexican democracy (the post PRI era). Citizens' support for the president's employment policies is less sensitive to objective conditions in the post-PRI era than during the PRI hegemony because in the emerging Mexican democracy people are concerned not only about the economy but also political problems such as corruption and crime.

The socio-demographic variables allow me to make some predictions about voters' support for the president' employment policies. Education, on the whole, is not significant and sometimes has positive impact on people's support to employment policies, but occasionally its impact is negative. Income, when it is

significant, has a positive impact on citizens' support for employment policies. This evidence suggests that wealthy people tend to approve more employment policies than poor people. Gender (Male) has a positive impact on people's perceptions about employment policies. Men approve more the president's employment policies than women. Age, when it is significant, has a negative effect on voters' support for employment policies. Older people have a stronger tendency to disapprove the president's employment policies than young people.

To summarize, consistent with the literature of American politics and the previous hypotheses, party ID leads citizens' support for the president's policies; however, some points are necessary to clarify. First, Mexican voters tend to approve the president's policies when the president is a member of their own party (*Priistas* approve Salinas's and Zedillo's policies, two former *Priista* presidents. *Panistas* support Fox's policies, the first *Panista* to ascend to the Presidency). Second, *Perredistas*, consistent with their party leaders' strategy of having no negotiations with the executive frequently, reject the president's policies when these come from either *Priistas* presidents or a *Panista* executive. Third, *Panistas* tend to approve employment policies of *Priista* presidents, (Salinas and Zedillo). The possible reason is that the two former *Priista* presidents governed with an economic policy very close to the *Panistas* preferences. Finally, objective indicators such as unemployment, people's complaints against the civil service (a proxy of corruption), and the number of convicted criminals in Mexico by year (crime) have different impact on people's

support for the president's policies. The impact of variables such as crime and corruption become stronger in the emerging Mexican democracy than during the PRI hegemony.

## **IX Conclusions**

While controlling for variables commonly used in the economic voting literature, this paper has examined data on presidential approval and citizens' support for the president's policies in Mexico from 1989 to 2006.

These results show that in a case outside the U.S. the political context affects the way in which people evaluate the president and his policies. In an emerging democracy such as Mexico, crime and corruption become important when voters evaluate the president and his policies. People's perceptions about the state of the economy and unemployment matter for approval and citizens' support for policies in Mexico, but with the ascension of an incipient democracy, Mexican voters have had the opportunity to consider other kinds of concerns different than the economy.

One of the findings of this paper is that although people's perceptions of the president's anti-corruption policies affect presidential approval in two different periods (the PRI hegemony, 89-00, and the post-PRI era, 01-06) , their

impact is different, higher in a democratic regime than in an autocracy. Moreover, while during the PRI hegemony people's perceptions of anti-crime policies do not matter for approval, in the post-PRI era this variable is significant. Other findings are the following: 1. Economic voting matters less for approval in the emerging Mexican democracy than in the PRI autocratic regime. 2. Partisanship is less powerful as a predictor of presidential approval in the post-PRI era than during the PRI hegemony. Finally, the effects of crime, corruption, and unemployment on people's support for the president's policies in the emerging Mexican democracy are different than those of the *Priista* autocracy. The impact of crime on people's support for the president's anti-crime policies is higher in the post-PRI era than during the PRI hegemony. The effect of corruption on anti-corruption policies is different in the two periods of my analysis. During the PRI hegemony, an increase in the level of corruption (the proxy is the number of complaints against the civil service) has a negative impact on people's support for anti-corruption policies. In the post-PRI era, an increase in the same variable has a positive impact on citizens' support for anti-corruption policies. The level of unemployment has a significant impact on voters' support for employment policies during the PRI autocratic regime, but not in the emerging Mexican democracy.

The evidence in this paper suggests that people's perception of the responsiveness of the political system affects the way that voters approve the president and his policies. During the PRI hegemony, it is likely that Mexican

citizens did not have many expectations about the president's capacity and effort to address problems such as crime and corruption because the PRI itself was the main symbol of these problems. In contrast to the *Priista* regime, the ascension of the *Panista* Vicente Fox to the presidency gave Mexican voters the opportunity to think that problems such as crime and corruption could be solved by a president who was not part of the old *Priista* system.

The main implication of these findings is that the relationship between the responsiveness of the political system (autocracies vs. emerging democracies) and voters' approval for the president should be reevaluated in order to examine with more accuracy how people evaluate national leaders and policies.

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