

HEMISPHERE FOCUS

January 28, 2011

Mexico's 2011 Gubernatorial Elections and their Impact on Drug Policy

George W. Grayson

Sunday, January 30, a hotly contested vote in Guerrero state marks the first of six elections this year for Mexican state executives. They will set the stage for the 2012 presidential race and indicate whether the once-dominant Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) can continue its political rebound. Most important is the July 3 competition in Mexico State where Governor Enrique Peña Nieto seeks to put in place a successor to spur his chances of succeeding President Felipe Calderón.

Calderón's center-right National Action Party (PAN), which forged pacts with Mexico's left-leaning parties last year, is negotiating with the leftist-nationalist Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) to craft similar accords to stave off a PRI comeback in 2011. Meanwhile, surging narco-violence threatens candidates, just as Peña Nieto has begun to articulate his approach to fighting cartels in his bid to capture the presidency.

Building Strength State by State

After losing its 71-year grip on the Los Pinos presidential residence, as well as a substantial number of congressional seats and governorships in 2000, Mexico's self-proclaimed "revolutionary party" is staging a comeback. The PRI increased its presence in the 500-member Chamber of Deputies from 106 seats in 2006 to 237 in 2009. Last year, it raised its number of governors to 19 out of 32. And it forged a unique accord among presidential aspirants—Enrique Peña Nieto, Senator Manlio Fabio Beltrones, and party chief Beatriz Paredes Rangel—to avoid open attacks on each other.

While Paredes had predicted that her party would sweep the dozen governorships in play last year, it turned out that three erstwhile PRI strongholds (Oaxaca, Puebla, and Sinaloa) fell to candidates supported by a PAN-left alliance engineered by César Nava Vázquez and Jesús Ortega Martínez, the respective leaders of the PAN and PRD. The losses jolted the PRI, such that Peña Nieto now seeks to project the image of a "new PRI" by installing the youthful Coahuila governor Humberto Moreira Valdés, 44, as party president in March.

Its main concern is the re-creation of a PAN-left alliance in Mexico State, which boasts 15 million voters.

Six Crucial Contests**1. Guerrero** (January 30—Governor)*Contenders:*

- Manual Añove Baños—Acapulco mayor; backed by the PRI, the Green Ecological Party (PVEM), and the National Alliance Party (PANAL); managed by powerful National Education Workers Syndicate (SNTE) chief Elba Esther Gordillo
- Angel Aguirre Rivero—former PRI interim governor; supported by the PRD, the leftist Workers Party (PT), and the Convergence Party (PC)
- Marcos Efrén Parra Gómez—PANista ex-mayor of Taxco

Analysis: Two PRI traditionalists are squaring off. Aguirre Rivero dropped his bid for the PRI candidacy as defeat was inevitable, only to resurface as an anti-PRI paladin. A poll published on January 24 in *El Universal* newspaper found Aguirre Rivero (50%) leading Añove Baños (43%), with Parra Gómez far behind (7%). The outcome will be a win-win situation for the PRI and Enrique Peña Nieto, who has ties to both top contenders.

2. Baja California Sur (February 6—Governor, 21 state legislators, and 5 mayors)*Gubernatorial contenders:*

- Luis Armando Díaz—former secretary of government under Governor Narciso Agúndez Montaño; backed by the PRD and the PT
- Marcos Antonio Covarrubias Villaseñor—a PRD federal deputy; endorsed by the PAN and the local Socialist Revolutionary Party
- Ricardo Barroso Agramont—former PRI state president; supported by PRI and PVEM banner
- Blanca Esthela Meza Torres—teacher; SNTE activist endorsed by PANAL

Analysis: Controversies over nepotism, questionable business deals, and narco-trafficking have haunted the regime of PRD

governor Narciso Agúndez Montaña clouding Díaz's candidacy. The PAN-endorsed Covarrubias (44%) leads Díaz (33%), Barroso (20%), and Meza (1.5%) in a December GEA-ISA poll whose findings were mirrored in a Testa Marketing survey.

3. Coahuila (July 3—Governor and 25 state legislators)

Gubernatorial contenders:

- Rubén Moreira Valdés—brother of outgoing governor; nominated by PRI, PVEM, PANAL, Social Democrats, and *Primer Coahuila Party*
- Guillermo Anaya Llamas—senator (PAN); will seek a coalition

Analysis: PRI wins. A 2008 survey named Governor Humberto Moreira one of the nation's most trusted state executives.¹ His brother Rubén has reenergized the state PRI machine by issuing credentials allowing party members to earn gifts and enable poor PRIistas to buy groceries and other necessities. A former teacher, the governor earmarked \$180,000 for an insurance scheme that covers 1 million students and educational workers.

4. Mexico State (July 3—Governor)

Possible contenders: Registration remains open.

Analysis: As mentioned above, a PAN-Left coalition could slow the PRI's juggernaut, but it is unlikely. In late January, the most probable opposition nominees were PAN's Felipe Bravo Mena, 57, a veteran politician who served as President Calderón's private secretary, and Senator Alejandro Encinas Rodríguez, 56, the PRD's Federal District mayor (2005–2006). However, the PRD's Encinas angers PANistas by refusing to recognize Calderón as the legal president, and Bravo Mena could be too conservative for most PRD voters in the state.

Governor Peña Nieto has not named his choice of the PRI standard-bearer. However, five names dominate the short list: Eruviel Ávila Villegas, mayor of Ecatepec, a city of 1 million contiguous to the Federal District; Huixquilucan mayor Alfredo Mazo Maza; state party president Ricardo Aguilar Castillo; Deputy Luis Videgaray Caso, an MIT-educated technocrat and a member of Peña Nieto's inner circle;² and Ernesto Nemer Álvarez, leader of the Mexico state legislature—with Mazo Maza being the least likely.

5. Nayarit (July 3—Governor, 30 state legislators, and 20 mayors)

¹ The Gabinete de Comunicación Estratégica carried out the "Encuesta Nacional 2008, Gobierno, Sociedad y Política"; see "Moreira entre los gobernadores más confiables," *El Universal*, June 5, 2008.

² Other members of the inner circle include former governor and political mentor Alfredo del Mazo Mazo González, Private Secretary Erwin Lino Zárate, Government Secretary-General Luis Miranda Nava, and Social Communications Director David López Gutiérrez; at the penumbra of this inner circle are Ernesto Nemer and Ricardo Aguilar.

Possible gubernatorial contenders:

- Senator Raúl Mejía González—PRI; former Tepic mayor and Governor Ney González Sánchez's brother-in-law
- Senator Gerardo Montenegro Ibarra—PRI; former federal deputy and SNTE activist
- Deputy Ivideliza Reyes Hernández—PAN; former Yesca mayor
- Martha Elena García de Echevarría—PRD; ex-wife of former Governor Antonio Echevarría Domínguez
- José Guadalupe Acosta Naranjo—PRD leader in the Chamber of Deputies

Analysis: The once-peaceful Nayarit has become dangerous as the Sinaloa Cartel clashes with enemies. The current governor is likely to deploy the PRI's campaign machinery in behalf of Mejía González. A PAN-left alliance represents the most promising possibility of an opposition upset.

6. Michoacán (November 13—Governor, 40 state legislators, and 113 mayors)

Possible gubernatorial contenders:

- Víctor Manuel Silva Tejeda—PRI; former federal deputy, close to Mexico governor Peña Nieto
- Fausto Vallejo y Figueroa—PRI; three-time mayor of Morelia
- Luisa María "Cocoa" Calderón Hinojosa—PAN; experienced politician and sister of the President Felipe Calderón
- Senator Silvano Aureoles Cornejo—PRD; former federal deputy
- Enrique Bautista Villegas—PRD; state legislator; former secretary of government for Governor Lázaro Cárdenas Batel (2002–2008)

Analysis: In recent years, Michoacán has endured a surge in drug-related murders. La Familia Michoacana, a vicious drug cartel, has formed parallel governments in many municipalities. Its virulent battle against the Los Zetas cartel amplifies the violence. Though unpopular himself, Governor Leonel Godoy Rangel seems to favor Senator Aureoles Cornejo of the PRD. The iconic Cárdenas family could back Bautista Villegas also of the PRD. The PAN's Luisa María Calderón may be hurt by her brother's current sagging popularity. So in the final analysis, the PRD is the party to beat.

Impact of State Elections on the 2012 Presidential Contest

A PRI triumph in Mexico State would fuel Governor Peña Nieto's drive for the presidency. He profits from divisions within PAN, which is torn between moderates and traditionalists.³ The latter resent President Calderón's

³ In January, Calderón shuffled his cabinet in order to promote the presidential candidacy of Finance Secretary Eduardo Cordero Arroyo. Other possibilities for the PAN nomination include Labor Secretary

proximity to figures in SNTE and the Petroleum Workers' Union, not to mention his bargaining with the left.

Intramural fighting is even worse in the PRD. Both Mexico City mayor Marcel Ebrard and Andrés Manuel López Obrador are vying for the left's candidacy in 2012. The former's chances depend on unifying the PRD, which is riven between centrists and firebrands. If the PRD rebuffs him, López Obrador could be a candidate for the Workers' Party, the Convergence Party, or both.

With the election 18 months away, Peña Nieto is the man to beat. A mid-November survey showed him at 41.9 percent popularity, trouncing the PAN's Cordero (12.2%), and López Obrador (14.9%). He fared equally well at 40.2 percent against Cordero (12.6%) and Ebrard (13.4%).⁴

Elections and the Fight against Crime

While Mexicans are preparing for a crucial set of elections, drug capos—through brutal assassinations—are signaling to politicians that they should leave the underworld alone.⁵ The crime syndicates don't actually want the Mexican state to "fail," a disaster that could trigger U.S. military involvement in their country; rather, they seek a regime parallel to elected state and local governments to carry out illicit activities without interference from officeholders.⁶

Peña Nieto has repeatedly urged less reliance on the armed forces and greater emphasis on civilian law-enforcement agencies. The problem is that Mexico still needs an honest, effective national police, and Calderón's efforts to create a force from scratch have been frustrated up to this point. Powerful federal and state lawmakers have opposed a single national law-enforcement agency, preferring instead, 32 separate forces that would strengthen ever-more-powerful governors.

So far, Peña Nieto has articulated only a vague anticrime policy, which bears similarities to President Calderón's. He speaks of establishing a special antinarcotics police, probably heavily dependent on the most effective cartel-fighting units: the Navy, the Navy's Marines, and the Public Security Ministry's Special Federal Support Force. His "National Strategy to Reduce Violence" seeks to reduce the occurrence of heinous crimes in five years. And he has argued for

expanding social programs, professionalizing the judiciary and police, concentrating on drug-trafficking routes, and more joint crime fighting ventures with Colombia, Peru, and the United States.⁷

As the Mexico State executive contemplates reaching out to Washington, President Calderón is already forging a NAFTA-style security alliance. Just as President Carlos Salinas labored to interweave the North American economies so that a successor could not disentangle them, Calderón is striving to cement bilateral law-enforcement and military cooperation so that they cannot be dismantled in the next *sexenio*. Peña Nieto's success depends heavily on whether he can get Mexico's elite to commit itself to joining this fight against organized crime and then uplift the nation's poor—sadly caught in the crossfire.

George W. Grayson, the Class of 1938 Professor at the College of William & Mary, is a senior associate at CSIS, an associate scholar at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, and author of Mexico: Narco Violence and a Failed State? (Transaction Press, 2009). gwwgray@wm.edu.

***Hemisphere Focus* is produced by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a private, tax-exempt institution focusing on international public policy issues. Its research is nonpartisan and nonproprietary. CSIS does not take specific policy positions. Accordingly, all views, positions, and conclusions expressed in this publication should be understood to be solely those of the author(s).**

© 2011 by the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Javier Lozano Alarcón, Education Secretary Alonso Lujambio Irazábal, and Senator Santiago Creel Miranda. Creel fares best in opinion polls but lost the presidential nomination to Calderón in 2006 with whom he shares bad blood. Some PAN ultra-conservatives favor Jalisco governor Emilio González Márquez.

⁴ Household survey taken by Berumen & Associates; see Carlos Ordóñez, "PRI encabeza intención de votar para 2012 con 27%," *El Universal*, December 6, 2010.

⁵ "Encuentran ejecutado a Alcalde Coahuila," *Reforma*, January 8, 2011.

⁶ Historian Crane Brinton introduced the concept of "dual sovereignty" in his classic, *Anatomy of Revolution*, rev. ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1965).

⁷ Enrique Peña Nieto, "How Should Mexico Deal with Violence?" *Financial Times*, January 6, 2011.