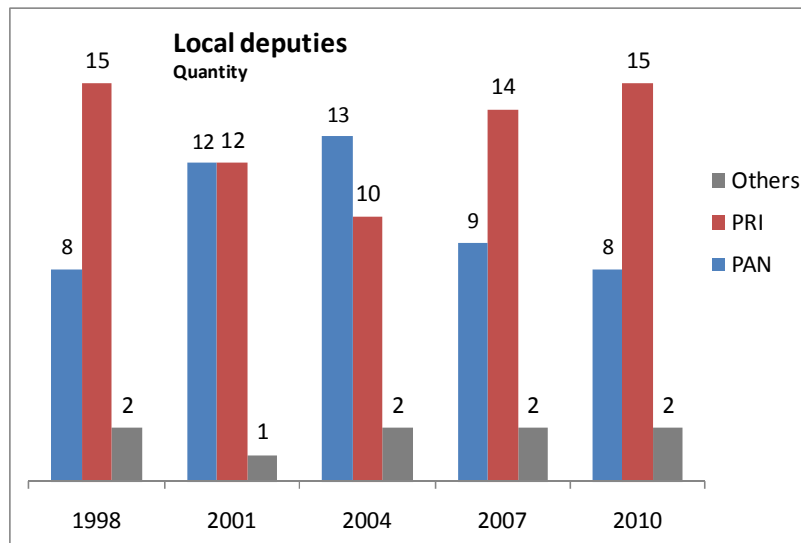


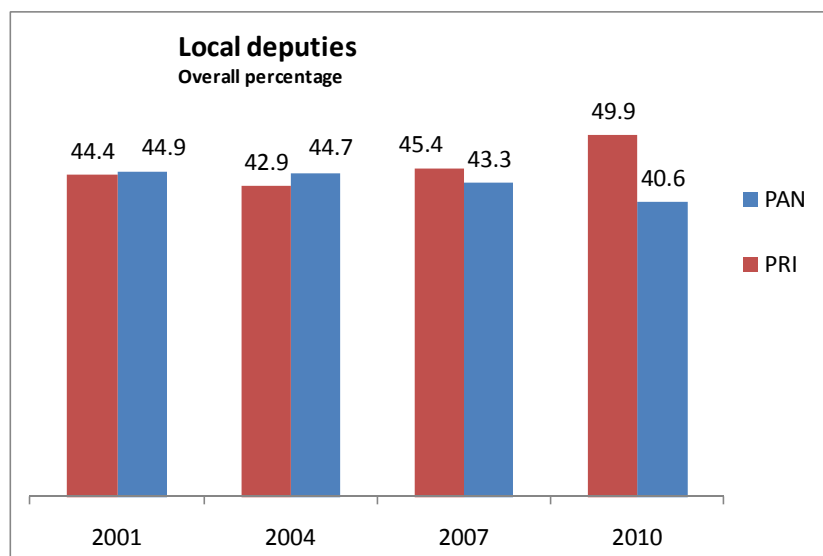


Elections in the Yucatán: May 16th close votes, significant PAN setback

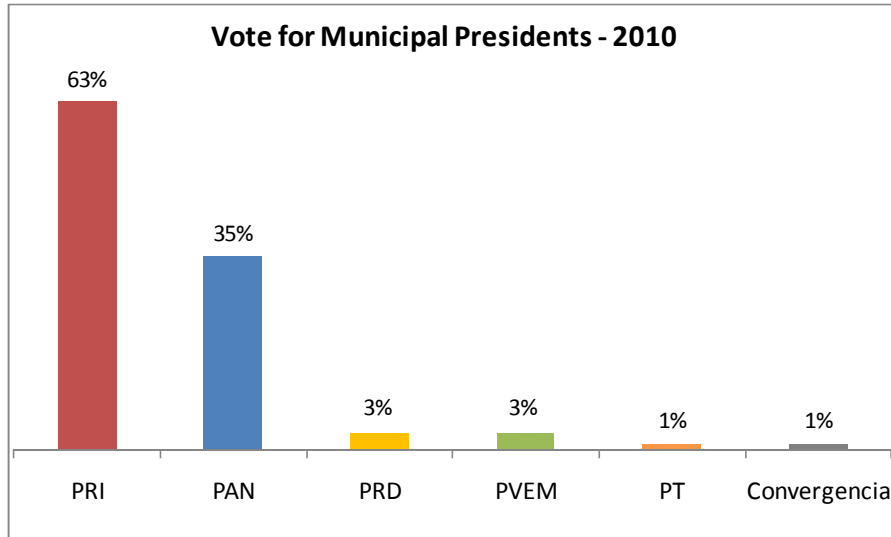
In the Yucatán, the PRI has retained its core base, and rebuilt a solid electoral majority in the State. In terms of the State legislature, the PRI position has returned to its dominating role coming off local elections 12 years ago.



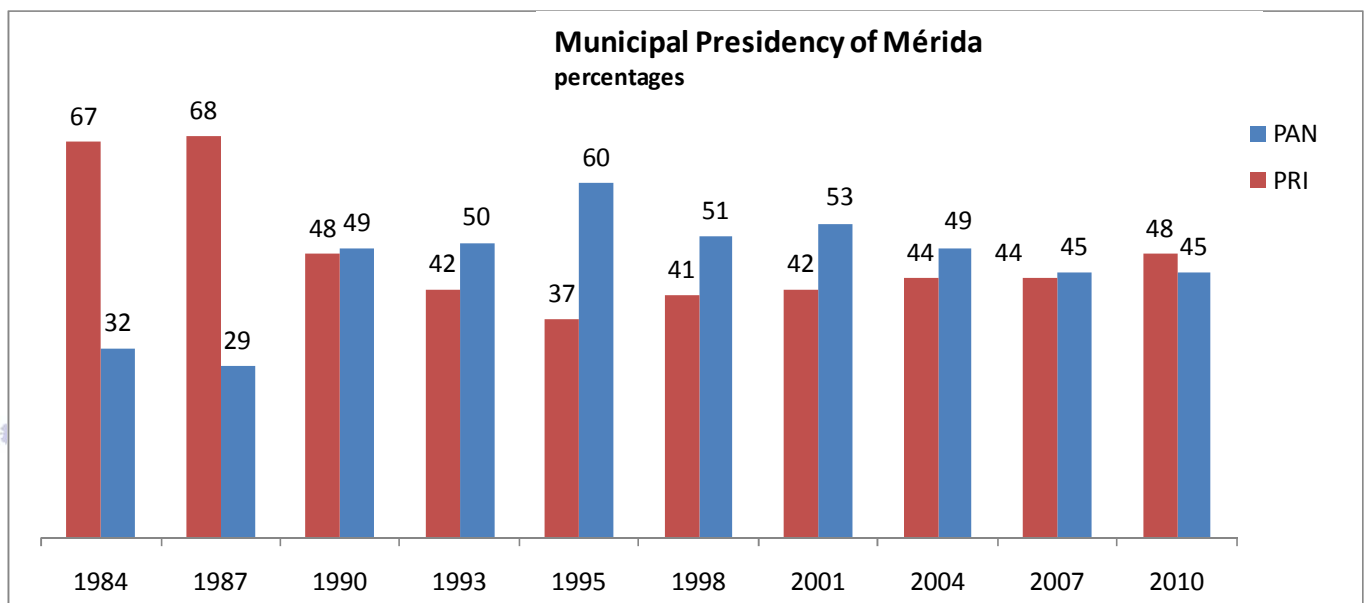
The Yucatán is more than just a symbol to the PAN. It came to represent a beachhead (after gaining the capital in 1992 and winning the Presidential elections of 2000 and 2006) that was to become a stronghold in the southeast, the lone exception to an ensemble of states that have been retained by the PRI, or had become the sites of PRI/PRD competition. Further, Calderón secured the candidacy of his party as Presidential candidate in 2006 after a close fought primary with Santiago Creel, largely from a lopsided vote in his favor from the Yucatán.¹



¹ The post primary internal challenge mounted by Creel in 2006 alleged fraud and focused on the Yucatán results.



As part of the blue tide stimulated by the Fox candidacy, the PAN in Yucatán emerged with a slight working majority in elections statewide (see above), but on the eve of returning to the Governorship in 2008 (following a lackluster PAN alternative in power) the PRI retook a majority and strengthened it last Sunday the 16th of May. By most standards, the national PAN under the Calderón government has failed up to now in consolidating its Southeastern outpost. During the 1980s, the PAN began to achieve electoral success challenging the PRI at the municipality level. First in the Bajío and the North, later in other key municipalities, including Mérida, capital of the Yucatán, the PAN established a strong electoral presence, going head to head with the PRI.





The PAN candidate for Municipal President in Mérida, Beatrice Zavala Peniche, is a member of the PAN elite, former Deputy, Senator-on-leave, and former federal Secretary of Social Development – further, she is a well placed cousin of the President’s wife. Throughout the campaign period, local television carried a plethora of federal advertising of social projects, formally stopped by the IFE in the remaining 13 states with elections two days after the Sunday, 16th of May, elections.

The election in Mérida was close, but is unlikely to be overturned on appeal to the Federal Electoral Tribunal. But all eyes will continue to be on Mérida for a time as it concentrates more than 43% of the registered voters in the State.

Credit will now be concentrated on two PRI women: national party President Beatrice Paredes and current Governor Ivonne Ortega (elected in 2008 in a revindication of the PRI). There was a reasonably good turnout compared to States in other parts of the country, of about 54% participation, but this is a 15.5% decline from the municipal elections of 2007. Each party ran on its own. From the perspective of the recent discussions, there were no formal alliances undertaken by the PAN or the PRD.

On balance, this shows careful base recovery and building by PRI, and a continuing debilitation of the PAN project, as led by Calderón as President and as the jealous PAN party campaign chief. Sunday the 16th of May does not determine what will happen, but it does not auger well for the PAN this summer.

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