
With the tremendous interest in Mexico since the mid-1970s, it is surprising that scholars have neglected the role of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). In all probability, the explanation for this neglect stems from the fact that most Mexicanists accepted Frank Brandenburg's view that the government party played a secondary political role to other Mexican institutions, notably the federal bureaucracy. Consequently, since the publication of works by Robert Scott and Vincent Padgett, little attention has been paid to PRI. Dale Story attempts to correct that imbalance by providing an up-to-date interpretation of the party's role in Mexican politics.

Story places his analysis of PRI in a larger view of the Mexican political system as a variant authoritarian form. In particular, he proposes examining the impact of the party on Mexico's political stability. His analysis focuses on several themes raised by other scholars, including the decline in linkages between PRI and the executive branch and the deterioration of support for PRI. In addition to his introductory arguments and a brief chapter on PRI's evolution, the author examines the ruling party in power, the electoral system, the internal organization of PRI, other political actors, and PRI's role in elite recruitment.

Scholars should not expect a major analytical work on PRI, but rather an introduction to the subject. The tone is descriptive, not speculative. The value of Story's brief book is that it brings together much recent literature on trends affecting the party's performance and leadership. In particular, Story provides some helpful insights into recent opposition trends, suggests a good sense of the internal organization of PRI, and describes the interaction between interest groups (especially business) and the party. He demonstrates the complexity of the relationships within and between PRI and other parties, and agrees with recent scholarship that these relationships often are stormy and neither entirely dependent or independent, and that the political skills of the party's leadership are declining. The author argues that PRI's most important role may be to moderate the difficulties entailed every six years during presidential succession.

Mexicanists will find little with which to disagree, since Story's interpretation is balanced and reasoned. Some scholars would want to see more emphasis given to intellectuals as an important societal factor. Others would expect the author to devote more attention to additional consequences of technocratic leadership for the PRI. Overall, however, the book provides a useful and up-to-date introduction to the present predicament of PRI.

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