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The former ruling party tries to reinvent itself**[Get article background](#)**

THE campaign was dirty and contentious. The result was briefly disputed by boisterous crowds. But in the end the election for state governor in Yucatán was notable for what is changing in Mexico rather than what remains the same. First Felipe Calderón, the country's new president, halted arguments over the count by recognising that his centre-right National Action Party (PAN) had lost and by calling Ivonne Ortega of the formerly ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) to congratulate her on her victory. Second, Ms Ortega seems to stand for what the PRI would like to be rather than what it once was.

Ms Ortega appeared to have won by around 7%. She survived PAN propaganda calling her a baby-killer for her pro-choice position on abortion (unusually for Mexico, Yucatán allows abortion). The PAN, which had run the state for six years, was hurt by an internal split. A former mayor of Mérida, the capital, stood for another party after losing the PAN primary. And Mr Calderón did little campaigning for the PAN's candidate. Political analysts say that he has agreed to stay clear of state races in return for the PRI's backing for his programme of structural reforms.

Having governed Mexico for seven decades until 2000, the PRI came a poor third in last year's presidential election. It holds the balance of power in Congress and has the largest number of state governorships. But its future depends on its ability to shed its previous corporatist habits and to reinvent itself as a modern centrist party.

In that, Ms Ortega looks like an asset. Still only 34, she entered politics a decade ago as mayor of her small town. She was elected to the federal Senate last year. She says she makes her living as a pig farmer and spent her senator's salary on charitable projects. Some claim that she is a protégée of Carlos Salinas, a former president, and an ally of the PRI's old-guard, though her staff deny this.

Yucatán, known for its Mayan architectural sites, is relatively poor. Ulises Carrillo, Ms Ortega's policy advisor, says the incoming governor has ambitious plans for new infrastructure and jobs. The signs are that the PRI will win the next election for state governor, in August in Baja California—another state governed by the PAN. If so, Mr Calderón may face some discontent in his own ranks. But the PRI's new national leader, Beatriz Paredes, can claim that her qualified support for Mr Calderón's reforms has done her party no harm.

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