

POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF RETURN MIGRATION

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Abstract

We explore the political consequences of increasing rates of return migration to Mexico following a tightening of enforcement policies and a sharp deterioration in economic conditions in the U.S. Using data on Mexican municipalities in the period 2000–2010 and an instrumental variable approach, we find that high rates of return migration are causally related to greater electoral support for the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), the traditional dominant party. Return migration is also related to lower election turnout and less competitive elections at the municipal level. We corroborate this finding using individual level data from the 2014 and 2016 waves of the “Mexico and the World” survey. The survey analysis shows that while returnees are less likely to vote, relatives with returnee members are more likely to support the PRI. All in all, by showing that return migration is causally related to more votes for the PRI, lower voting rates, less competitive elections, and diverging preferences among returnees and their families, our paper questions the role of return migrants as agents of democratic diffusion.

Introduction

In recent years, a net migration rate close to zero between the United States (U.S.) and Mexico has made headlines (Passel, Cohn, and Gonzalez-Barrera 2012). Several factors have contributed to this dramatic change in migration patterns: following the tightening of migration restrictions in the north and changing demographic trends in Mexico, emigration rates have fallen considerably. At the same time, the Great Recession in the U.S. has sent many Mexican migrants back home and has deterred many others from undertaking the journey to the U.S. While the literature exploring the political consequences of emigration in sending countries is booming, hardly any research exists on what the return of migrants “with augmented human capital, financial capital (savings), foreign connections, ideas, and, perhaps critically, changed expectations” (Kapur 2014, 486) may imply for the outlook of new democracies. We start to unpack this black box by studying the electoral consequences of *return migration*.

Limited scholarly research has shown that return migrants, especially returnees coming back from advanced polities, may be drivers of democratic change by disseminating their views about democratic governance and political accountability learned abroad (Levitt 1998; Spilimbergo 2009; Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow 2010; Chauvet and Mercier 2014; Batista and Vicente 2011). Some authors, however, remain sceptical about the long-lasting effect of returnees in enhancing the democratic life of the localities to which they return (Pérez-Armendáriz 2014). Research on Mexico has shown that returnees tend to disengage from politics shortly after their arrival, in part as a reaction to the ill-will of non-migrant co-nationals, who find returnees too “dissimilar” to be valuable role models (Pérez-Armendáriz 2014, 82).

In Mexico in particular, extant research has connected high emigration rates with a *decline* in electoral support for the authoritarian single party *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), in power for over 70 years. Emigration has thus been interpreted as a

facilitator of the country's late transition to democracy in 2000. The finding that the PRI was electorally hit the most by emigration where it had been long entrenched led some authors to interpret the result in terms of emigration (and accompanying remittances) debilitating the clientelistic networks the PRI had been relying on for decades to secure its permanence in power (Pfütze 2012). The question, then, is whether the increase in returnees and lower emigration rates may have reverted this trend, causing the PRI to strengthen electorally at the local and national levels.

Using an instrumental variable approach and a municipal level analysis of data from 2000 to 2010, we find that high rates of return migration have resulted in a greater probability of the PRI being in power both at the municipal and federal levels. Return migration also resulted in less support for the *Partido de Acción Nacional* (PAN), which controlled the presidency from 2000 to 2012. We also find a decline in electoral competition and a negative effect on voter turnout in municipal elections associated with return migration. Finally, high return rates also increased the chances of a PRI victory in the 2012 presidential election.

We further corroborate these results by complementing our aggregate analysis with individual level data from two waves of the survey "Mexico and the World" (CIDE, 2014, 2016). The results of our individual level analysis show that returnees do disengage from politics, turning out to vote less and not showing any clear party affinity. Interestingly, however, respondents with returnee relatives in the household are more likely to support the PRI, while returnees' relatives as well as returnees themselves are *not* more likely to exhibit strong support for democracy as the best type of government. These results confirm the absence of "democratic" social learning *from* returnees who upon their return disengage from politics rather than becoming agents of democratic change.

While the alternation in power resulting from the 2012 presidential election in Mexico is perfectly compatible with the workings of a healthy democracy, we should be wary of attributing returnees' contribution to it if return migration is associated with lower electoral

turnout, lower electoral competition, and the absence of unambiguous preference for democracy. However, this is what we find. Overall, our results suggest that *returnees disengage from politics rather than diffusing democratic practices and values*.

The paper proceeds as follows: in the first section, we proceed to describe both the changing demographic trends and changing political landscape during this period. Next, we discuss the literature on out-migration and politics, emphasizing the existence of a large gap when it comes to understanding the impact of return migration on politics. We derive some testable hypotheses. In the third section, we discuss our data and methods. In Section Four we present the results. Finally, we conclude in Section Five with reflections and suggestions for future research.

1. Return Migration: Return of the PRI?

During our period of study (2000–2010), there have been several forces affecting migration flows that we need to consider. On the one hand, lower fertility rates, a major economic recession in the U.S., and a tightening of border policies have had a substantial effect on economic migration from Mexico to the U.S. (Passel, Cohn, and Gonzalez-Barrera 2012, 6). Regarding emigration, according to the 2010 Mexican Census (INEGI), the number of Mexicans entering the U.S has declined from 3 million (1995–2000) to 1.4 million (2005–2010) (Passel, Cohn, and Gonzalez-Barrera 2012, 7).¹ While 63% of the Mexican migrants currently in the U.S. arrived prior to 2000, the figure went down to 31% in the period 2000–2010 (Zong and Batalova 2016).² According to the Migration Policy Institute (2016), this is the first decline in the stock of Mexican migrants in the U.S. since the 1930s. Villareal (2014)

¹ The trend has continued to move downward in the period 2010 through 2015, with the annual number of Mexicans immigrating to the U.S. falling from 140,000 to 41,000 (Zenteno Quintero (cited in López 2017, 3).

² <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/mexican-immigrants-united-states>

reports that the rate of Mexico–U.S. migration has declined from 25 migrants per thousand in 2005 to an annual international migration rate for Mexican men of 7 per thousand in 2012.

Regarding return migration figures, in the period 2005–2010, 1.4 million Mexicans and their families returned to Mexico, double the number in the years 1995–2000. To give a sense of the magnitude of the return, in terms of proportions, “the 2010 census showed that nearly one in three (31%) of those who had left for the U.S. within the previous five years had returned. That compares with about one in six (17%) for those who had left for the U.S. within the five years prior to the 2000 Mexican census” (Passel, Cohn, and Gonzalez-Barrera 2012, 15). The Centre for Migratory Studies at the National Institute of Migration reports a constant return of Mexican migrants estimated at 400 thousand migrants annually (García-Zamora 2014, 41). It is not surprising that net migration figures have been close to zero in recent times (BBVA Bancomer 2015).

It is important to clarify that a majority of Mexican returnees came back voluntarily (Moctezuma 2013, 153). Between 2005 and 2010, the percentage of voluntary returnees, often moving back with their families, varied between 65% and 95% (Passel et al. 2012 citing Pew Hispanic research, 22); it is also true that in this period, deportations have taken place in record numbers.³ The profile of Mexican returnees has changed, with a predominance of male, married, young adults with elementary education levels and coming from rural areas rather than the well-off, highly-educated retiree immigrants that characterized return migration in the past. Returnees are going back to states with high levels of historical migration. Up to 80% return to their states of origin (Moctezuma 2013; López 2017, 4).

Research by Bancomer showed that related to these lower emigration and higher return migration trends, over 275,000 families stopped receiving remittances between 2006

³ During our study period, the increase in the number of deportees has been phenomenal, amounting to 2.1 million. Moreover, about half were convicted criminals (Kapur 2014, 487).

and 2008.⁴ In 2009, remittances fell by 6.5%. Although remittances recovered swiftly after the Great Recession, between 2000 and 2010 they declined in all Mexican states, with Jalisco, Durango, and Aguascalientes experiencing the greatest declines (BBVA Bancomer 2015, 146, 84).

In parallel with these changing demographic trends, the PRI made its return to the Mexican presidency in the 2012 election, with its candidate Enrique Peña Nieto (EPN) winning by a comfortable 3.2 million-vote margin. EPN obtained 38.2% of the valid vote in comparison to 31.6% cast for leftist Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO).⁵ After two terms in power under the presidencies of Vicente Fox (2000–2006) and Felipe Calderón (2006–2012), the conservative PAN, represented by candidate Josefina Vázquez Mota, obtained just 25.4% of the votes.

Did the migratory trends described above help the PRI return to power? Numerous explanations have been put forward to understand the PRI return, all of them valuable and complementary. Domínguez et al.'s book (2015) explored the role of clientelism, shifting public mood, and campaign strategies as likely causes behind the PRI victory. Some of these contributions reveal persistent patterns in Mexican politics, such as the relative irrelevance of political parties in comparison to presidential candidates in presidential elections (Bruhn 2015, 47) as well as the good health of electoral strategies such as cronyism and vote buying that continue to be “alive and well” (Nichter and Palmer-Rubin 2015, 201).⁶

⁴ https://www.bbvaresearch.com/KETD/fbin/mult/090727_ObsMigraMexico_2_eng_tcm348-198646.pdf

⁵ However, it is important to keep in mind that the PRI never lost its presence in many municipalities and in a majority of states (twenty out of thirty-two) during PAN rule (Nichter and Palmer-Rubin 2015, 204). As Flores-Macías (2013, 137) highlights, the PRI has yet to lose a gubernatorial election in 9 states that are home to a third of the populace.

⁶ Most of the contributions use survey data from the 2012 Mexican Panel Study,

Except for quick mentions in Vivanco et al. (2015) and Flores-Macías (2013), the role of migration (international and internal) is not mentioned in analyses of the 2012 presidential results. However, the changes in migratory dynamics explained above are worth exploring as a plausible cause of the electoral fate of the formerly dominant PRI. Did greater return migration impact election results at the local level? Can we causally relate greater levels of return migration with greater support for the PRI at the local and the federal levels?

2. Return Migration and Democratization: What Do We Know?

Research on the political consequences of international migration for sending countries has rapidly expanded (Kapur 2010, 2014; Meseguer and Burgess 2014). In particular, there is a growing debate on the political consequences that emigration, remittances (both financial and social), and return migration have for the prospects of authoritarian survival (Abdih et al. 2012; Ahmed 2012), transitions to democracy (Moses 2011; Pfutze 2012; Escribà-Folch, Meseguer, and Wright 2015; Bearce and Laks Hutnick 2011), and the prospect of democratic consolidation via changes in political culture (Goodman and Hiskey 2008; Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow 2010; Córdova and Hiskey 2015; Barsbai et al. 2017). Of all the channels in which the migratory phenomenon may impact the politics of sending countries (Kapur and McHale 2012), we contend that return migration remains the least explored.

On the first question; namely, whether emigration helps or threatens the survival of autocrats, there is contradictory evidence. The results underline the need to distinguish the effect of out-migration on dictators depending on the institutional characteristics of autocracies. Abdih et al. (2012) and Ahmed (2012) emphasize that out-migration and remittances may facilitate the survival of autocracies via an income and a substitution effect. Remittances enable recipients to provide public and social goods for themselves and their communities (Adida and Girod 2011; Aparicio and Meseguer 2012). As a result, autocrats do not need to devote as many public resources to these goods. They can re-arrange the budget

so that less is spent on welfare provision and more is allocated to fund patronage, corruption, and military spending (Ahmed 2012; Easton and Montinola 2017). This redounds to longer tenures for autocrats.⁷

Other authors have challenged this account. In particular, looking at the case of Mexico, Pfutze (2012) showed that emigration and remittances debilitated electoral support for the PRI. The mechanism involved relates to the institutional features of single party authoritarian regimes. These regimes have two characteristics that make them vulnerable to the reception of monetary remittances: first, single party regimes hold regular elections. Second, they rely on broad clientelistic networks to secure electoral victories (Magaloni 2006; Greene 2007; Díaz-Cayeros, Estévez, and Magaloni 2016; Langston 2017). The reception of remittances debilitates the effectiveness of clientelistic inducements by making remittance recipients more autonomous from the state. Pfutze (2012) shows that as a result, municipalities with higher rates of emigration were less likely to turn out to vote for the dominant party, which facilitated the transition to democracy in 2000 after 71 years of PRI rule.⁸

⁷ In democracies, a similar substitution effect has been documented by Adida and Girod (2011) in Mexico and Doyle (2015) in Latin American new democracies. According to Doyle (2015), remittance recipients demand less redistribution and are wary of increased taxes due to the income effect of remittances. They support more conservative platforms, which in turn translates into less social spending over time.

⁸ Escribà-Folch et al. (2015) tested the validity of this mechanism across a broad sample of single-party autocracies. Their research confirmed that single-party regimes around the world are more likely to experience a transition to democracy if they receive large remittance inflows. Bearce and Hutnick (2011) corroborate the finding that outflows of people from less developed countries facilitate transitions to democracy. The authors argue that if emigrants move from unequal to more equal countries and migrants are negatively selected in terms of the income distribution, the reduction of inequality in home countries makes transitions to democracy more feasible.

A great deal of the current research on the impact of emigration on sending country politics focuses on countries that have experienced a recent transition to democracy. In these cases, the relevant questions are: Does the quality of institutions improve as a result of social and financial remittances? Do migrants remit democracy (Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow 2010)? And if so, by what channels? What are the relative roles played by monetary vs. *social remittances* – the transmission of norms, values, and ideas via communication with relatives abroad (Levitt 1998)? Does the effect of out-migration depend on the destination country of emigrants (Rother 2009; Spilimbergo 2009)?

One result seems fairly robust. *Social remittances* increase non-electoral political participation, such as participation in local meetings or in protests, among those with relatives abroad. There also seems to be evidence of attitudinal changes, such as more support for democracy in general, but a more critical stance with respect to how democracy works in the home country (Goodman and Hiskey 2008; Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow 2010; Careja and Emmenegger 2012; Córdova and Hiskey 2015). Emigrants transmit democratic values and practices, but only provided they settle down in countries with good governance and working democratic institutions (Spilimbergo 2009; Rother 2009; Córdova and Hiskey 2015).

While the so-called diaspora channel – that is, the influence of emigrants in home countries *while abroad* – is being thoroughly studied, we know very little about the impact that return migrants have on the politics of their home countries once they return. There is research on the *economic* impact that returnees have in their communities (Chauvet and Mercier 2014, 631–32). However, we have very little empirical evidence about the *political* consequences of return migration.

On one hand, positive accounts such as those in Batista and Vicente (2011) in Cape Verde and Chauvet and Mercier in Mali (2014) report more demands for accountability and increased electoral turnout (accompanied by more competitive local elections) respectively associated with return migration. Batista and Vicente (2011) carried out a survey on

perceptions of corruption in the public sector, followed by an experiment asking participants to mail a postcard if they wanted the results of the survey to be published in the national press. The authors found that a higher proportion of return migrants in a locality increased the probability of sending a postcard calling for the publication of results, which they interpreted as an indicator of demand for more transparency and accountability. Mercier and Chauvet (2014) use census data and the election results for the 2009 municipal elections in Mali to explore the impact of returnees coming back from different destinations. In the case studies of both Mali and Cape Verde, the positive effects on turnout are associated with the presence of return migrants coming back from non-African countries, thus arguably being exposed to better functioning political institutions. In Mexico, Waddell and Fontenla's (2015) study of return migration in Guanajuato reports a positive effect of returnees on health, education, income, and political participation in their communities. And López (2017) shows that return migration moderates the negative impact of financial remittances on voter turnout.

On the other hand, Pérez-Armendáriz's (2014) detailed exploration of the political effects of distant contact with emigrant relatives vs. face-to-face contact with returnees from the U.S. in the Mexican context reveals a more ambiguous picture. Based on 138 interviews with emigrants, non-migrants, and returnees, Pérez-Armendáriz finds, first, that the asymmetry of power that generates pride and admiration, as well as the utilitarian value of having an émigré relative abroad, vanishes once the relative comes back. Second, returnees are often perceived by non-migrants as *dissimilar* and disconnected from the reality to which they return. Pérez-Armendáriz's extensive qualitative evidence shows that returnees, likely because of this lack of a good reception, try but lose their interest in driving changes in their communities barely a couple of years after their return (p. 78). Importantly, the persistence of transmitting civic values associated with return migration does not seem to be connected with the circumstances of the return (forced or voluntary, with or without savings). Regardless, the positive effect that migrants' return might have in spreading good political and civic practices

in their localities appears to be very ephemeral. Her study reveals a picture of returnees as dubious agents of democratic change.

While the studies reviewed above looked at voter turnout and political attitudes and behaviors as dependent variables, none of them explored how return migration might affect the electoral prospects of incumbents vs. opposition parties. Yet this issue is of particular relevance in countries that have experienced a recent transition to democracy. We would like to understand whether return migration strengthens democratic consolidation by helping to spread democratic ideals that dampen the electoral fortunes of traditional clientelistic parties; or, alternatively, whether return migration undermines the process of democratic consolidation by decreasing electoral participation, electoral competition, and facilitating the return to power of old “dinosaurs” and their questionable democratic practices (Flores-Macías 2013; Nichter and Palmer-Rubin 2015).

Two alternative scenarios are possible. First, return migrants may exert influence in their localities through social remittances; that is, through the ideas they bring back on political participation, the rule of law, the roles of the state, and the value of democratic politics as an effective way to keep politicians accountable. Returnees may spread these values in their regular contact with non-migrants. If they take leadership roles in their communities and invite non-migrant co-nationals to engage in civic participation, their influence may be more evident (Batista and Vicente 2011; Pérez-Armendáriz 2014; Chauvet and Mercier 2014). Thus, returnees’ social remittances resulting from their exposure to more transparent and less corrupt political environments could potentially result in greater demands for long-term improvements in governance. In terms of electoral preferences, social remittances brought back by returnees under the assumption that they play a role as diffusers of democratic norms predict *return migration and electoral support for the PRI to be negatively associated*, because the PRI continues to be a party with a sustained record of patronage, vote buying, and persistent authoritarian leanings (Flores-Macías 2013, 139-140;

Nichter and Rubin-Palmer 2015).⁹ Also, the role of return migrants as diffusers of democratic values leads us to predict that return migration should be associated with *greater electoral turnout and unambiguous support for democracy as the preferred political system*.

In an alternative account, returnees often face disdain upon their return. Non-migrant co-nationals and families with returnees frequently find that “returnees do not adapt well to living with the family again;” they are either too idealistic or alienated by their experience abroad, if not directly a source of “more problems than benefits.” They soon lose the role model status they acquired while away. Further, while the betterment of economic conditions attached to emigration and remittances makes non-migrants admire their emigrant relatives, once these relatives are back, even if it is with financial resources, households see less reason to sustain reciprocal obligations based on the insurance émigrés used to provide. This in turn undermines social cohesion (Pérez-Armendáriz 2014, 82, 85). The previous economic autonomy from the state may thus be reverted, in which case localities with high levels of return migration and households with return migrants may go back to being susceptible to entering the game of clientelistic politics and/or may exhibit greater support for parties with statist policies (Doyle 2015; Acevedo 2017). As the risk-smoothing safety valve of emigration becomes a less viable option, we would expect return migrants, their families, and the communities to which they return to be less likely to support the liberal economic policies of

⁹ As Flores-Macías states, “[A]lthough the PRI rhetoric since 2000 has been one of renewal, its legislative record, its governors’ behavior, and its electoral practices do not support this claim.” (p. 39). To be sure, clientelistic practices, which continue to be widely employed on the campaign trail, most prominently (although not exclusively) by the PRI (Nichter and Rubin-Palmer 2015, 203; Flores-Macías 2013), cannot be held responsible for the 3.2 million vote spread between the PRI and the second-place contender (Nichter and Rubin-Palmer 2015).

the conservative PAN and more likely to lean toward opposition parties.¹⁰ Under this premise, we expect *return migration and electoral support for the PRI (and the Partido de la Revolución Democrática, PRD) to be positively associated*. We also expect returnees' political alienation to translate into *lower turnout levels and unclear support for democracy as a system*.

3. Data and Method

We estimate the effect of return migration on election outcomes at the municipal level using a two-year panel regression (2000 and 2010). The main methodological challenge lies in the fact that return migration is endogenous to election outcomes leading to biased estimates. On one hand, politics might drive migration decisions, provoking selection bias among the migrant population. On the other hand, economics drives both politics and migration, potentially causing omitted variable bias.

In response to these challenges, we follow the previous literature that instrumented for migration variables using labor market conditions in the destination country as a source of exogenous variation (R. Adams and Cuecuecha 2013; R. Adams and Cuecuecha 2010; Anzoategui, Demirgüç-Kunt, and Martínez Pería 2014 among others). In the case of Mexico, labor market conditions in the U.S. have previously been used as an instrument for remittances (Ambrosius and Cuecuecha 2016; Ambrosius 2017).

The logic behind the instrument is the following: The labor market effects of the 2007/2008 financial crisis in the U.S. had strong effects on the economic situation of Mexican migrants. A large proportion of Mexican migrants worked in sectors that were heavily affected by the post-crisis recession, such as construction and the service sectors. In addition,

¹⁰ Alternative explanations, such as the surge in criminal activity following Felipe Calderón's policy of open confrontation of drug cartels, do not seem to be borne out by the data as plausible explanations of EPN's electoral victory (Vivanco et al. 2015).

weak or non-existing labour protection for migrants with undocumented status made them particularly vulnerable to declines in labour demand during the recession. The deterioration of income opportunities for migrants in the U.S. had strong effects on migratory movements. As documented above, Mexico registered both lower out-migration and higher return migration in the years following the U.S. financial crisis. After years of strong out-migration from Mexico to the U.S. since the 1990s, more Mexicans were leaving than arriving in the U.S. following the financial crisis.

We exploit the fact that the labor market effects of the U.S. financial crisis were not evenly distributed across U.S. states: some states have been more affected by unemployment increases than others. At the same time, different migration corridors have emerged across the 32 Mexican states. Due to network effects that reduce the costs of migration, these migration corridors exhibit strong path-dependencies and change only slowly over time (McKenzie and Rapoport 2007). For example, migration networks in the northern states date back to the recruitment of Mexican labor for railway construction in the 1920s, and later the ‘bracero’ program of labor recruitment in the 1950s and 1960s. In contrast, migration networks that emerged in central and southern states have a more recent origin, registering strong outward movements in the 1990s and 2000s in the context of structural changes within the Mexican agricultural sector (cp. Durand, Massey, and Parrado 1999). Different migration corridors have led to variation in exposure to U.S. labor market conditions between Mexican states, depending on the distribution of the Mexican diaspora across U.S. states.

To capture regional exposure to U.S. labor markets, an indicator for labor market conditions over the previous three years is constructed by subtracting the level of unemployment in U.S. state k in year $t-3$ from the level of unemployment in U.S. state k in year t . In order to generate variation by Mexican state, job creation in U.S. states is multiplied by the percentage of consular documents (*matrículas consulares*) that were requested by individuals from Mexican state j who lived in U.S. state k in 2008 (*Instituto de Mexicanos en*

el Exterior, IME, 2008).¹¹ Note that the IME (2008) data are intentionally left without variation so that all time variation in the created variable is due to fluctuations in job creation. We call this variable *Dusemp*.

The exogeneity of the instrument is satisfied because regional variation in U.S. labor market conditions should not have an effect on variation in election outcomes in Mexico other than through the migration channel. Note that all regressions include municipal fixed effects, so that all time-constant differences at the level of states and municipalities as well as overall time-trends are controlled for. Hence, the instrument builds entirely on regional variation in labor markets across U.S. states, which is plausibly unrelated to regional variation in election outcomes in Mexico.

We fit the following model at the municipal level:

$$\text{(eq. 1) } Return_{i,t} = \beta_1 + \beta_2 Dusemp_{i,t} + \beta_3 X_{i,t} + v_i + u_{i,t}$$

$$\text{(eq. 2) } Elec_{i,t} = \beta_4 + \beta_5 \widehat{Return}_{i,t} + \beta_6 X_{i,t} + v_i + u_{i,t}$$

In the first regression step, *Return* is the share of return migrants in municipality *i* at time *t*, explained by an increase in the instrument *Dusemp* of unemployment rates over the previous three years in U.S. states where Mexican migrants live. *X* is a vector of control variables. The β are the estimated coefficients, *u* is the error term, and *v* is a municipality fixed effect that controls for all time-invariant unobserved factors.

In the second regression step (2), *Elec* refers to the election outcome for municipality *i* at time *t*, and $\widehat{Return}_{i,t}$ are the estimates from the first step equation (1). The regressions are

¹¹ The idea of using IME data to construct instruments is due to Alfredo Cuecuecha. See Ambrosius and Cuecuecha (2016) for an application to Mexican household data.

estimated from a sample of 1,443 municipalities (out of a total of 2,456) with complete data coverage in both 2000 and 2010.¹²

We use data from several sources. Data from CIDAC (*Centro de Investigación para el Desarrollo*) are used to create indicators of election outcomes at the municipal level, as described in Table A1 in the Appendix for the years 2000 and 2010. All indicators refer to the most recent municipal election. Municipal elections in Mexico are held every three years and the electoral calendar is staggered. For the two census years of 2000 and 2010, last elections may therefore refer to three possible election cycles, either the years 1999/2008, 2000/2009, or 1998/2010. In order to account for this variation, the variable *Elect_Lst* is the number of years since the last municipal election took place. As an alternative, we also look at election outcomes in presidential elections in 2012.

The binary variables *PRI*, *PAN*, and *PRD* indicate which of the three main parties held power in the municipality, either alone or in coalition with other parties. A second set of election variables captures the competitiveness of election outcomes and voter turnouts. *Winner* is the share of the winning party relative to all other votes. *Winner_Dist* is the distance between the vote share of the winning party and the party in the second place. *Party_Switch* indicates whether the ruling party (or party coalition) in 2010 differed from that in 2000. As an indicator of electoral engagement, *Turnout* captures voter turnout as the number of votes relative to the total adult population in a municipality. Finally, we also include the effect of return migration on voting behavior at the level of municipalities during

¹² Election data at the municipal level is available for only 2,001 municipalities, due mainly to the fact that the state of Oaxaca does not hold party-based elections, but is governed according to local traditions (*usos y costumbres*). The sample is further reduced due to limited data availability on covariates.

the presidential elections in 2012. *PRI_PRvote*, *PAN_PRvote* and *PRD_PRvote* capture the share of votes for each of the three main parties in presidential elections.¹³

The main explanatory variable is return migration (*Return*) over the previous five years, measured as the share of total households in each municipality that reported return migrants in the past five years. The fact that the share of return migrants increased substantially between 2000 and 2010 from 1.05% to 3.17% underlines the strong effect of the U.S. recession on return migration.

A number of additional socioeconomic controls are included in the models, both at the municipal and at the state level. *Pop* refers to population size. A human development indicator at the level of municipalities (*HDI*) is included to capture several dimensions of poverty (health, education and income). Two additional indicators reflect differences in levels of social and economic development of municipalities: an aggregate indicator of social deprivation (“*rezago social*”, *Margin*) is used as a summary of deficiencies in the areas of level of education achieved, access to health services, and living conditions. A poverty headcount (*Poverty*) measures the share of persons in a municipality with insufficient income to cover basic expenses of nutrition, health and education. The Gini index (*Gini*) at the level of municipalities measures differences in income distribution. *Male* refers to the share of households headed by males. The age of the household head serves as an indicator of demographic composition (*Agehh*). The variable *Indig* indicates whether an indigenous language was spoken in the household. *Educ* is the average number of years of schooling of

¹³ In 2000, the PAN ran in a coalition with the Green Party (*Partido Verde Ecologista*) as “Alliance for Change,” while the PRD ran in a coalition with other parties from the left under the name “Alliance for Mexico.” Because of the party membership of the presidential candidates, we treat coalitions in the 2010 presidential elections as PAN and PRD votes respectively.

household heads in the municipality. *GDPSH* is the respective state's share of Mexican GDP, and *GDPPC* measures per capita GDP at the Mexican state level. As an additional control for the economic situation, *Empl* is the share of the population in a municipality that was employed. *Homic* are annual homicides per 100,000 persons at the level of municipalities. To make sure that return migration has an independent effect regardless of other trends in emigration and remittances, we also consider other migration-related variables as controls in the robustness checks (see Supplementary Appendix Tables S3 to S6): *Remit* is the share of households who received remittances during the last year, and *Emig* is the share of households who reported emigrants during the last five years. See Table A2 in the Appendix for a description of all variables and sources.

Using the above strategy, we are able to identify an impact of return migration on election outcomes at the municipal level. However, by merely looking at the municipal data, we are unable to determine whether our findings are shaped by returnees' political preferences. It could be possible that return migration shapes (or not) others' political behavior in their families and communities (Levitt 1998). We therefore add a second level of analysis using individual survey data to better understand the impact of return migration on political preferences and behavior.

4. Results

4.1. Evidence from Municipal Elections

As the results show, there is unequivocal evidence that return migration has resulted in significant electoral gains for the PRI at the municipal and the federal levels, as well as in less competitive election outcomes.

Table 1 shows results from the first regression step (eq. 1) in which we estimate the effect of (changes) in unemployment levels in the U.S. states where Mexican migrants live (*Dusempl*) on return migration. All data are included in differences to remove the time-

constant municipality fixed effect ν . The instrument has the expected sign and is strong. It changes only moderately when a large number of time-varying controls are added to the preferred specification (2).¹⁴

¹⁴ Time-varying controls include the share of state GDP in total Mexican GDP and per capita GDP at the state level. At the municipal level, controls are the share of households headed by males, the average age and years of schooling of household heads, the share of the population that is employed, the share of households that speak an indigenous language, population size (log), per capita homicide rates, a human development indicator, levels of income inequality, a composite indicator of municipal marginality and a poverty headcount (see Table 2 and the coefficients for all covariates in Supplementary Appendix Table S1).

Table 1: First Step Regression of US Labor Market Shocks (DUSEMP) on Return Migration (Return)

	(1)	(2)
	Return	Return
Dusemp (Instrument)	0.019***	0.017***
	[10.7]	[8.62]
N	1569	1443
F-stat	120.89	16.04
R ²	0.07	0.14
adj. R ²	0.07	0.14

10% (*), 5% (**) and 1% (***). First step instrumental regression of unemployment rates in US states where migrants reside on return migration (*Return*). Heteroscedasticity-robust t-values are given in square brackets. In addition to municipality fixed effects, specification (2) also controls for the full set of time-varying controls as described in the text. Coefficients for control variables are shown in the Supplementary Appendix S1.

Tables 2 to 4 show second step results for election outcomes, with causal estimates for return migration on the probability for each of the three main parties of holding power (Table 2), electoral competitiveness of municipal elections and voter turnout (Table 3), and vote shares received by each of the three main parties in the 2012 presidential elections (Table 4). The significance of the Wu-Hausman test statistics (low p-values) in Tables 2 to 4 indicates biased coefficients in the non-instrumented regression and the need for instruments to address endogeneity.¹⁵ All weak instrument F-statistics are above the critical values of Stock and Yogo (2002). For each dependent variable, regressions are shown with municipality and year fixed effects, as well as with the full set of controls mentioned above. Since our main interest lies with the coefficient for return migration, we do not delve into a discussion of control variables, which behave roughly as expected.¹⁶

¹⁵ See the Supplementary Appendix S9 to S12 for un-instrumented regression output.

¹⁶ See the Supplementary Appendix Tables S3-S6 for the full tables including coefficients for all control variables.

Table 2 reveals that municipalities with a large share of return migration have a larger probability of being governed by the PRI.¹⁷ A one percentage point increase in the share of return migrants implies a ≈ 17 percentage point greater probability of being governed by the PRI (either alone or in coalition with other parties). In contrast, the PAN has a lower probability of holding power with increased return migration. We do not find a statistically significant effect for the probability of being governed by the PRD.

Table 2: Effects of Return Migration on the Probability of Being in Power (Second Step)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	PRI	PAN	PRD
Return	17***	-16***	-0.20
	[4.1]	[3.3]	[2.7]
N	1443	1443	1443
weak instr. F-stat	75.09	75.09	75.09
Wu-Hausman (p-val)	5.3e-07	7e-08	0.93

10% (*), 5% (**), and 1% (***). Heteroscedasticity robust standard errors are given in square brackets. In addition to municipality fixed effects, all specifications also control for the full set of time-varying controls as described in the text. Coefficients for control variables are shown in the Supplementary Appendix Table S3. Weak instrument test statistics >10 show no sign of weakness. Significance of the Wu-Hausman test (low p-values) indicates that return migration has to be treated as endogenous.

Table 3 looks at electoral competitiveness and electoral engagement by examining the impact of return migration on several indicators: the vote share of the winning party in municipal elections (*Winner*), the margin of victory measured as the distance between the first and second parties (*Winner_Dist*), whether the governing party alternated between 2000 and 2010 (*Party_Swtch*), and total votes relative to the adult population (*Turnout*). A larger share of return migrants in the municipality increased the vote share for the winning party, and

¹⁷ All the main parties occasionally run for municipal elections in coalition with smaller parties. The message is unchanged if we include coalitions, or if we estimate the effect of return migration on the probability of each of the main parties for being in power. Table S4 in the Supplementary Appendix also shows results for vote share of each of the main parties.

increased the distance between the winning party and the party in the second place. Importantly, return migration is also associated with a lower probability of party alternation. In other words, in the case of Mexico, return migration causally reduced electoral competitiveness at the municipal level. Moreover, return migration is associated with a considerable disengagement in municipal elections as reflected in lower voter turnout.

Table 3: Effect of Return Migration on Electoral Competitiveness (Second Step)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Winner	Winner_Dist	Party_Swch	Turnout
Return	5.4***	7.9***	-11***	-12***
	[1.1]	[1.6]	[2.4]	[4.7]
N	1443	1443	1443	1443
weak instr. F-stat	75.09	75.09	75.09	75.09
Wu-Hausman (p-val)	2.5E-09	1.3E-08	2.4E-7	0.00096

10% (*), 5% (**) and 1% (***). Heteroscedasticity robust standard errors are given in square brackets. In addition to municipality fixed effects, all specifications also control for the full set of time-varying controls as described in the text. Coefficients for control variables are shown in Supplementary Appendix Table S5. Weak instrument test statistics >10 show no sign of weakness. Significance of the Wu-Hausman test (low p-values) indicates that return migration has to be treated as endogenous.

Finally, electoral outcomes in presidential elections as shown in Table 4 confirm the general pattern we found for municipal elections, although the size of the coefficient is smaller than for municipal elections¹⁸: The PRI clearly benefitted from return migration, and the PRD lost from it. In the 2012 presidential elections, return migration showed no statistically significant effect on the probability of voting for the PAN.

¹⁸ Several reasons may explain the smaller coefficients during federal elections. For one, elections took place in 2012 whereas exogenous changes in return migration due to U.S. labor market shocks is measured over 2007–2010. The years following 2010 were characterized by a recovery in U.S. labor markets. Second, PAN and PRD votes in the 2000 presidential elections include coalitions with other parties. This could affect the size of coefficients.

Table 4: Effect of Return Migration on Presidential Election Outcomes (Second Step)

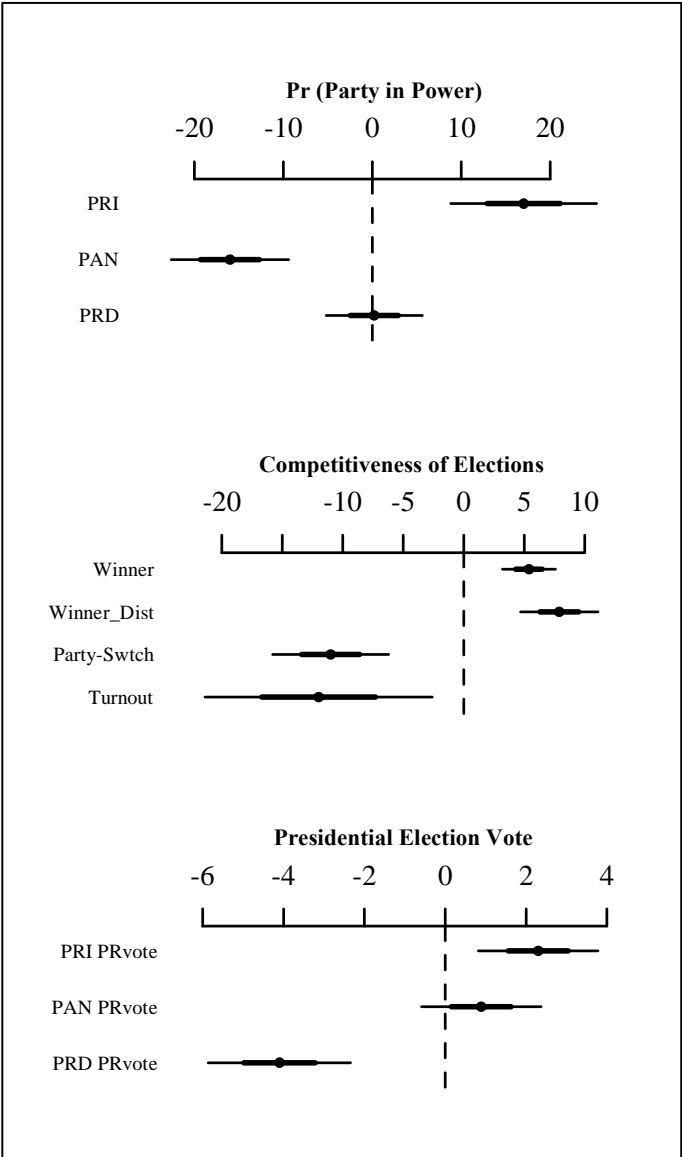
	(1) PRI PRvote	(2) PAN PRvote	(3) PRD PRvote
Return	2.3*** [0.74]	0.89 [0.74]	-4.1*** [0.88]
N	1438	1438	1438
weak instr. F-stat	75.85	75.85	75.85
Wu-Hausman (p-val)	0.0033	0.24	9.5E-08

10% (*), 5% (**) and 1% (***). Heteroscedasticity robust standard errors are given in square brackets. In addition to municipality fixed effects, all specifications also control for the full set of time-varying controls as described in the text. Coefficients for control variables are shown in Supplementary Appendix S6. Weak instrument test statistics >10 show no sign of weakness. Significance of the Wu-Hausman test (low p-values) indicates that return migration has to be treated as endogenous.

Figure 1 summarizes the coefficients from Tables 2 to 4. The PRI benefitted from return migration as a result of the U.S. labor market shock following 2007, tightening of migration conditions, and subsequent return migration, at the expense of the conservative PAN. This result holds at both the municipal and federal levels. Importantly, note that we find a positive effect of return migration on the PRI vote both in municipalities that are PRI strongholds (defined as municipalities where the PRI governed without interruption from 1986 to 2000) and in non-strongholds.¹⁹ Finally, it is noteworthy that these shifts in election outcomes were accompanied by less competitive elections as reflected in larger margins of victory, a lower probability of alternation in municipal governments, and lower voter turnouts.

¹⁹ Gains in terms of PRI vote share as a result of return migration were on average about 30% larger in PRI strongholds than in non-strongholds. See Supplementary Appendix Tables S7 and S8.

Figure 1: Coefficient Plot. Effects of Return Migration on Election Outcomes



Coefficients for the variables of interest from Tables 2 to 4, including 95% (50%) confidence intervals.

4. 2. Evidence from Survey Data

Our previous finding that municipalities with high shares of return migrants favor a party that continues to be well known for mastering broad clientelistic and authoritarian practices (Flores-Macías 2013; Nichter and Rubin-Palmer 2015; Langston 2017) is not consistent with an account of returnees as agents of democratic change. The same can be said of the findings of lower electoral turnout and lower electoral competition in those municipalities. However, these results do fit well with alternative accounts of returnees that question their capacity to diffuse democratic behaviors (Pérez-Armendáriz 2014).

We employ survey data to start unpacking the reasons behind the municipal findings. We use data from the public opinion project “Mexico and the World” (CIDE).²⁰ This survey is fielded every two years and focuses on public opinion on foreign policy in Mexico (N=2,400). While the survey does not contain information on which party the respondents voted for, it does ask them about their party affinity. It also asks about turnout in the 2012 presidential elections, and about their support for democracy as the best possible political system. The survey is particularly valuable in that it contains a battery of questions on international migration and specifically on return migration.²¹ We employed a question asking respondents whether they had ever lived abroad (*Lived Abroad*). Further, the survey asks whether the respondent has any family member who has returned to the household in the last three years (*Returnee Family Member*). The latter is a relevant question since it is in line with the municipal indicator of return we used in the aggregate analysis, which asked about

²⁰ <http://lasamericasyelmundo.cide.edu/>

²¹ The 2016 wave contains questions on the circumstances of return and reasons for returning, as well as questions about the returnee’s circumstances while abroad. The number of observations is, however, too small to allow reliable inferences once we account for municipal fixed effects. We are not aware of any other survey resource asking about both return migration and political behaviors and preferences.

returnee members in the household. Moreover, *Returnee Family Member* allows us to compare the political behavior and preferences of returnees with the political behavior of returnees' relatives, thus providing a test of political diffusion from returnees to their families. Unfortunately, detailed questions on return migration were only collected in 2014 and 2016. Although the years of the survey analysis differ from the period covered in the aggregate analysis, the survey analysis allows an exploration of how return migrants and their families perceive different political parties and the political system already in place under the new PRI rule in comparison to non-migrants. We also consider it interesting to assess whether the effects of the Great Recession lingered beyond 2010, shaping the preferences of returnees and their families in any discernable ways. About 12% of respondents in the survey declare they have lived abroad while close to 15% state they have some member who returned in the previous three years. We run logistic regressions of the following form:

(eq. 3) *Political Outcomes*_j

$$= \beta_7 + \beta_8 \textit{Livedabroad}_j + \beta_9 \textit{ReturneeFamilyMember}_j + \beta_{10}X_j + u_j$$

The political outcomes and preferences are: (1) *Turnout*, which asks about participation in the 2012 presidential election; (2) Party affinities or a set of binary outcome variables of self-declared affinity by respondent *j* to any of the three main parties; *PRI Affinity*, *PAN Affinity* and *PRD Affinity*. Many respondents claim that they do not feel close to any party, and therefore we explore another outcome, *No Party Affinity*, which is an additional indicator of disengagement; and (3) *Support for Democracy*, a variable denoting a high degree of support for (very much agreeing with) democracy as the best form of government in generic terms. The return variables (*Lived Abroad*, *Returnee Family Member*), have been explained above. *u* is the error term, and the β are the estimated coefficients. *X* is a

vector of control variables; we include *age*, *education*, and gender (variable “*male*”) of respondents as demographic controls. We control for a measure of self-evaluation of *wealth*. In addition, several binary variables capture respondents’ assessment of their prospective economic situation and the retrospective situation of the country (*Sociotropic* and *Pocketbook*). We also control for levels of interpersonal trust (*Trust in Others*) and for another migration variable; namely, whether the respondent has a *relative abroad*. See Table A3 in the Appendix for a summary of the survey questions we employ.

Table 5 shows the results for logit regressions on voter turnout, party affinities of respondents, and support for democracy. All regressions include year and municipality fixed effects, which control for unobserved differences related to respondents’ location.

Table 5. Determinants of Political Behavior and Preferences (Logit) and Return Migration, Municipal and Year Fixed Effects (2014 – 2016)

Dependent variables	(1) Turnout	(2) PRI Affinity	(3) PRD Affinity	(4) PAN Affinity	(5) No party Affinity	(6) Support for Democracy
Lived Abroad	-0.093*** [0.031]	-0.019 [0.025]	-0.002 [0.022]	-0.019 [0.024]	0.053 [0.034]	0.008 [0.029]
Returnee in Family	-0.001 [0.024]	0.061*** [0.022]	0.040** [0.019]	-0.012 [0.021]	-0.071** [0.031]	0.015 [0.028]
Observations	3,713	3,426	1,642	2,794	3,779	3,278
Number of clusters	283	248	103	189	286	246
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Municipality FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

10% (*), 5% (**) and 1% (***). The table shows marginal effects (at the mean of the covariates) from logit regressions on binary outcome variables. Robust standard errors clustered on municipality shown in brackets. All models include municipal and year fixed effects (not shown; see online appendix). All models control for age, gender, wealth, evaluations of personal and country economic situation, levels of interpersonal trust, and whether the respondent has a relative abroad. See Supplementary Appendix Table S13 for full results. The lower number of observations for the PRD Affinity specification has to do with the low variation in that dependent variable.

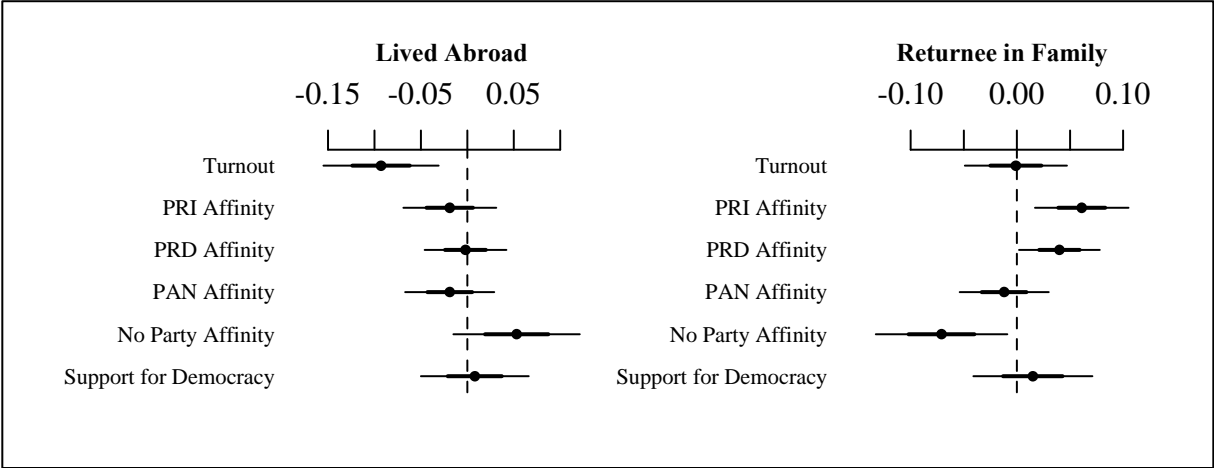
Several results stand out: First, individuals who report having lived abroad have hardly any distinctive political preferences in comparison to non-returnees. Except for the probability of not showing any party affinity, all the other signs are negative indicating a lower probability of feeling close to any party. The coefficients are, however, statistically insignificant. Moreover, in line with the municipal results, returnees are less likely to turn out to vote than non-migrants. Specifically, those respondents who report having lived abroad have about 9 percentage points lower probability of showing up to vote.

Second, our municipal level result regarding the electoral fate of the PRI seems to be driven by respondents who report having a returnee member in the household, not by returnees themselves. Family members of returnees feel closer to the PRI and PRD. They are also *less* likely to declare no party affinity, compared to respondents without returnees in the family. This result supports our finding at the municipal level. To illustrate, controlling for their own returnee condition, respondents who report a returned migrant in the family in the last three years were about 6 percentage points more likely to feel closer to the PRI. Finally, neither having lived abroad nor having a returnee member in the family induces respondents to declare strong support for democracy as a political system.²² These results are robust to controlling for whether respondents receive remittances, a variable itself statistically insignificant to explain electoral participation and party affinities (see Table S14 in the Supplementary Appendix). Therefore, return migration has an effect on its own independently of how remittance flows change with return migration. The results are also robust to controlling for whether respondents would like to migrate, which is frequently related to political brain drain (Hiskey, Montalvo, and Orcés 2014). Controlling for this variable, return

²² 30% of respondents strongly agree with democracy being the best possible political system. This finding is robust to coding support for democracy with value 1 if respondents somewhat agree or very much agree with democracy being the preferred form of government despite its problems (reported by a high 80% of the sample).

migrants are less likely to have voted in presidential elections, less likely to feel close to the PRI, and more likely to report no party affinity. See Supplementary Appendix Table S15.²³ All in all, the results of the survey analysis show that returnees are more politically apathetic, while their families are more likely to show affinity for PRI and PRD than respondents without returnees in the households. Overall, returnees do *not* appear to be agents of democratic diffusion.

Figure 2: Coefficient Plot. Effects of Migration Experiences on Party Affinity at the Individual Level



The figure shows coefficients from Table 5, including 95% (50%) confidence intervals.

5. Discussion

While a number of recent studies have emphasized a potentially important role of out-migration and remittances for democratic transitions in countries of origin, the effects of *return migration* on politics remain largely unexplored. By taking a closer look at the case of Mexico, this paper makes an effort to start unpacking the black box of return migration and politics. We find that the traditional party PRI – which governed Mexico for 71 years and is still associated with widespread practices of corruption and clientelism – strongly benefitted

²³ The question about intention to migrate has a very high rate of non-response, and reduces our sample size considerably.

from return migration, both in municipal and presidential elections. Particularly worrisome is the observation that return migration resulted in lower electoral competitiveness, lower voter turnouts, and a lower probability of a change in party at the municipal level. Using labor market conditions in the U.S. as an instrument for return migration together with municipality fixed effects allows us to provide evidence of a causal relationship between return migration and electoral outcomes. We corroborate findings from the municipality level with an analysis of survey data. While respondents with past migration experience do not have a clear party preference and tend to disengage from politics, those who had a returnee in their family declare a stronger affinity for the PRI. Overall, our findings do not square well with the optimistic “democratic diffusion hypothesis” that paints returnees as drivers of democratic improvements in their communities.

Our survey results indicate that municipal level election outcomes are driven by the political preferences of returnees’ families (or their communities), rather than by the voting behavior and political affinities of returnees themselves. Although there does not seem to be clear evidence of a strong negative correlation between greater rates of return and a worsening of economic conditions in our datasets,²⁴ higher rates of return and lower opportunities of emigrating to a depressed U.S. labor market, coupled with the disappointing economic performance under PAN rule must have increased dissatisfaction with the liberal economic policies of the *Panistas*. Electoral punishment of the PAN is supported by our municipal analysis. McCann (2015), for instance, attributes the PRI victory in the 2012 presidential election in part to retrospective economic voting motivated by the disappointing economic performance under the two PAN presidencies. Relatedly, in the period 2009–2012, Baker

²⁴As shown in the Supplementary Appendix (Table S2), remittances and return migration correlate positively. Frequently, returnees maintain transnational lives and bring their financial resources with them (Cassarino 2004). Also, our models control for evaluations of own (prospective) and the country’s (retrospective) economic situation.

(2015) reports an apparent change in “public mood” toward more statist positions – at least in the economic realm – following the Great Recession. The author finds that this shift also contributed to explaining the return of the PRI to power. At this point, we should not rule out that support for the PRI among returnee families might be related to renewed attractiveness of clientelistic inducements among those households, rather than to the programmatic offering by parties located to the center-left of the political spectrum. Finally, longing for what Lorenzo Meyer described as “the good old days of efficient authoritarianism” (cited in McCann 2015, 98) might have been instilled in high return migration communities and families with returnee members, explaining their preference for the PRI. Given a foreseeable increase of return migration in the future, this research agenda should give priority to addressing its consequences in new democracies. In addition, future research should systematically explore the material and/or non-material basis of the support for the PRI among returnee households.

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APPENDIX

Table A1: Description of Election Data (Municipality Level)

Variable	2000	2010	Description
PRI	0.707 [0.455]	0.504 [0.5]	Binary indicator of whether municipalities were governed by PRI, either alone or as part of a coalition
PAN	0.15 [0.358]	0.449 [0.498]	Binary indicator of whether municipalities were governed by PAN, either alone or as part of a coalition
PRD	0.126 [0.332]	0.177 [0.381]	Binary indicator of whether municipalities were governed by PRD, either alone or as part of a coalition
PRI Vote	0.468 [0.153]	0.384 [0.182]	Votes for the PRI during the most recent municipal election, as a share of all votes
PAN Vote	0.2 [0.177]	0.255 [0.187]	Votes for the PAN during the most recent municipal election, as a share of all votes
PRD Vote	0.192 [0.171]	0.128 [0.153]	Votes for the PRD during the most recent municipal election, as a share of all votes
Winner	0.499 [0.137]	0.493 [0.115]	Winning party's share of all votes during the most recent municipal election
Winner_Dist	0.178 [0.183]	0.145 [0.158]	Distance between winning and second place party during the most recent municipal election
Party_Swtch	n.a. n.a.	0.28 [0.25]	Binary indicator of whether ruling party at municipal level in 2010 was the same as the ruling party in 2000
Turnout	0.78 [1.47]	0.709 [0.617]	Estimate of voter turnout in most recent municipal elections (share of total votes relative to the adult population)
PRI PRvote	0.48 [0.13]	0.34 [0.0941]	Share of votes for the PRI in 2000 and 2012 federal elections
PAN PRvote	0.281 [0.156]	0.25 [0.121]	Share of votes for the PAN in 2000 and 2012 federal elections. Votes in 2010 refer to the coalition party <i>Allianza para el Cambio</i> in support of the PAN candidate
PRD PRvote	0.196 [0.14]	0.176 [0.105]	Share of votes for the PRD in 2000 and 2012 federal elections. Votes in 2010 refer to the coalition party <i>Allianza para México</i> in support of the PRD candidate

The table provides mean values and standard deviations in square brackets for up to 1,569 municipalities for which full data was available in both 2000 and 2010. Data on election outcomes for the most recent election at the municipal level is taken from *Centro de Investigación para el Desarrollo, A.C.* (CIDAC 2016). Data for presidential election outcomes is from *Instituto Nacional Electoral* (INE 2017). Population data is taken from INEGI (2015).

Table A2: Description of Explanatory and Control Variables (Municipality and State Level)

Variable	2000	2010	Description
DUSEMP	0.132 [0.0474]	0.527 [0.26]	Indicator of exposure to change in unemployment rates in US states where Mexican migrants reside, over the period t to $t-3$. In order to generate variation per Mexican state, unemployment levels are weighted based on the number of consular documents that were requested by individuals from Mexican state j who lived in US state k in 2008. Data normalized to $[0,1]$ ^{a)}
Return	0.0105 [0.0163]	0.0317 [0.0281]	Share of households reporting return migrants over the previous five years ^{b)}
Remit	0.0611 [0.0737]	0.0593 [0.0691]	Share of households reporting international remittances over the last year ^{b)}
Elec_lst	1.17 [0.956]	0.592 [0.897]	Years since last municipal election took place ^{g)}
Emig	0.0588 [0.0644]	0.0326 [0.0343]	Share of households reporting emigrants over the previous five years ^{b)}
Pop	45500 [115000]	50200 [130000]	Population size of municipality (logged in the regression) ^{c)}
Homic	29.9 [40.6]	34.9 [78.5]	Annual homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, municipal level ^{c)}
HDI	0.729 [0.0723]	0.798 [0.054]	Multidimensional human development index at the municipality level ^{d)}
Male	0.813 [0.0537]	0.784 [0.0524]	Share of households in the municipality whose head is male ^{c)}
Margin	-0.392 [0.95]	-0.628 [0.91]	Aggregate indicator of social deprivation (“ <i>rezago social</i> ”) based on deficiencies in educational achievements, access to health services, and living conditions ^{f)}
Gini	0.461 [0.0675]	0.382 [0.045]	Gini index of income inequality at the municipality level ^{f)}
Poverty	50.9 [22.6]	40.5 [19.3]	Share of persons in a municipality with insufficient income to cover basic expenses for nutrition, health and education (“ <i>pobreza de carencia</i> ”) ^{f)}
Agehh	46.5 [3.35]	49.1 [3.44]	Average age of household heads in each municipality ^{c)}
Indig	0.178 [0.297]	0.161 [0.276]	Share of persons in the municipality who speak an indigenous language ^{c)}
Educ	4.76 [1.57]	5.64 [1.7]	Average years of schooling of the head of household ^{c)}
GDPSH	0.0309 [0.0225]	0.0319 [0.0217]	States’ share in Mexican GDP ^{c)}
GDPPC	6020 [2460]	6670 [4640]	Per capita GDP at the level of Mexican states, in 2005 USD ^{c)}
Empl	0.0301 [0.0573]	0.0395 [0.0344]	Share of the population in the municipality that is employed ^{c)}

The table reports mean values and standard deviations in square brackets for up to 1,569 municipalities for which full data was available in both 2000 and 2010. Sources: a) USBLS (2014) and IME (2008), b) CONAPO (2002, 2012), c) INEGI (2015), d) PNUD (2014), f) CONEVAL (2017) g) CIDAC (2016)

Table A3: Survey Data Description

Variables # obs	Mean sd	Description
Turnout # 4710	0.70 [0.46]	Binary indicator of whether respondents voted in the last election
PRI Affinity # 4727	0.22 [0.42]	Binary indicator of whether respondents declared an affinity to the PRI independently of voting behavior during the recent election
PRD Affinity # 4727	0.05 [0.22]	Binary indicator of whether respondents declared an affinity to the PRD independently of voting behavior during the recent election
PAN Affinity # 4727	0.13 [0.34]	Binary indicator of whether respondents declared an affinity to the PAN independently of voting behavior during the recent election
No Partisan Affinity # 4727	0.55 [0.50]	Binary indicator of whether respondents declared an affinity to no party independently of voting behavior during the recent election
Support for Democracy (Very Much) # 4369	0.30 [0.46]	Binary indicator of whether respondents had very strong support for democracy
Lived Abroad # 4694	0.11 [0.31]	Binary indicator of whether respondents have lived abroad
Returnee in the Family # 4737	0.15 [0.36]	Binary indicator of whether respondents have family members who lived abroad and returned to Mexico in the past three years
Relative Abroad # 4780	0.45 [0.50]	Binary indicator of whether respondents have family members abroad now
Male # 4799	0.50 [0.50]	Binary indicator of whether respondents are male
Age # 4794	41.56 [15.75]	Age of respondent
Education # 4789	2.14 [1.11]	Highest degree of education attained of respondents
Wealth # 4719	2.63 [0.83]	Subjective evaluation of income levels
Sociotropic (Bad) # 4488	0.67 [0.47]	Binary indicator of whether respondents claim that the national economy is in an equally bad or worse situation
Pocketbook (Bad) # 4482	0.61 [0.49]	Binary indicator of whether respondents claim that future personal economy is in an equally bad or worse situation
Trust in Others # 4749	2.53 [0.78]	Categorical Variable. How much do you trust other people? 1 “Not at all” 2 “A little” 3 “Somewhat” 4 “Very Much”
Remittances (Yes) #4764	0.12 [0.33]	Binary Variable of answer to “do you receive remittances?” “Yes” 1, “No” 0
Intention to Migrate (Yes) #2361	0.34 [0.47]	If you could, would you live outside Mexico? “Yes” 1, “No” 0.

The table reports pooled mean values and standard deviations in square brackets from the survey “Mexico and the World” (CIDE), 2014 and 2016 waves.