INTEREST REPRESENTATION AND PARTY SYSTEM IN MEXICO
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NÚMERO 37
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INTEREST REPRESENTATION AND PARTY SYSTEM IN MEXICO
Introduction

Since the 1980s, like other Latin American countries, Mexico has faced two parallel processes of transformation: first, the inward-oriented development model, with a strong State participation that permitted a stable economic expansion, was submitted to structural adjustment and liberalization policies; second, the system of interest representation which was consolidated by the post-revolutionary regime experienced growing pressures for the installation of pluralist channels of participation. These tendencies can be summarized in two words: market and democracy. As has been extensively discussed in the literature on transitions to democracy and implementation of economic adjustment policies, the coincidence of the two processes makes it difficult to establish a causal relationship between the two. The adoption of policies directed toward liberalizing market forces does not necessarily assist the democratization of political relations. Neither does the existence of democratic political processes constitute a guarantee of success for the implementation of market-oriented economic policies. The more successful Latin American experiences with adjustment policies appear to indicate that authoritarian contexts are more propitious for the implementation of these.

Even if this is the case, I am not convinced that the best way to conceptualize the relation between the two processes is by defining it in terms of the conditions required for the successful realization of one project or the other. The Mexican experience shows that changes in one realm can sometimes produce somewhat contradictory effects in the other. For example, although it is certain that the application of economic liberalization measures contributes toward weakening certain forms of political control, many times the conditions for a successful realization of such measures imply an increase of political control, although through other means. Moreover, the political impact of adjustment policies tends to be differentiated depending on the nature of the activities of the participating actors: the impact of one adjustment policy may translate for some of them into actions promoting the democratization of the regime and, for others, into actions directed to support more exclusive forms of political participation.

Rather than approaching the relationship between adjustment policies and democratization in a global way or as one being the condition for the successful implantation of the other, I would use an approach that stresses the existence of different realms,

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1 This paper is part of a broader research project on political parties’ strategies in the negotiation of electoral rules in Mexico. It aims to explain historically the question of stability in the Mexican political system from a cooperation perspective.

2 From the perspective of “governability”, Ducatenzeiler and Oxhorn argued convincingly to that effect. See Ducatenzeiler and Oxhorn, 1994.

3 This is the fate of Mexican corporatist control of labor which has been weakened in its traditional ways but strengthened through apparently more modern means, such as the repeated pactos agreed between the State, the unions and the entrepreneurs since the end of 1987. See Zapata’s contribution to this volume and Bizberg, 1994.
actors, resources and strategies. In this approach, complex interactions are established between the economic and political realms: both function as autonomous paths that provide actors with the possibility of using, in a somewhat interchangeable manner, resources associated with one path or the other. In terms of strategies unfolded by different actors, the effects of transformations in a given realm may acquire a different meaning in the other area depending on the strategic pattern of confrontation prevailing in the considered area: resources can be drawn from one realm to be used in a different fashion in the other realm. For example, the successes of economic policies can be used by an authoritarian government to put a break on the process of political liberalization, but at the same time those successes could be retrieved by a center-right opposition party in order to demand a broader political opening; in the same way, the failure of adjustment policies could be used by “hardliners” within an authoritarian government to prevent any political liberalization, just as such a failure could be used by center-left forces to demand a greater political opening. The possibility of making a positive use of the resources will depend on the pattern of strategic confrontation prevailing in the respective realms of action: there is no necessary correspondence in patterns of strategic confrontation between the political and economic realms.

In a situation of political and economic stability, I maintain that the development model and the system of interest representation are self-reinforcing in a positive manner. In this scenario, an efficient and durable model of cooperation is consolidated between principal actors in both realms.

In and of itself, cooperation is compatible with any type of political system or development model. What changes, depending on the type of political system and development model, are the norms and procedures necessary for the functioning of cooperation. In moments of accelerated change within the development model and in the system of interest representation, the interaction between them produces debilitating effects which have an impact on the level of cooperation.

In this paper, I am interested in addressing one restricted aspect of the problem of cooperation in the context of economic restructuring and pressures for democratization in the Mexican political system. This aspect refers to the relations between the three principal political parties, the PRI, the PAN and the PRD, and the negotiation of rules of the game acceptable to all of them. I begin by assuming that the relatively successful introduction of adjustment policies has not been accompanied by a model of efficient and durable cooperation between principal political actors.

This paper is divided into two parts. The first will attempt to show how the transformations in the Mexican development model are reflected in the party system

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4 Although the argument here is hypothetical, it stems from the Mexican political context: center-right political forces may be read as Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) and center-left as Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) which are the two main opposition parties in Mexico.

5 I understand by model of cooperation the existence of formal and informal norms and procedures for conflict resolution, known and accepted by the actors. See North, 1990, chap. II.

6 For the purpose of this paper, when I use the term political actors I refer to the political parties.
and electoral competition. This task may appear enormous, but I think that it is possible
to illustrate in a broad way some of the statements made above about the relationship
between economics and politics. The second part explores more closely the problem
of cooperation between the principal political parties in negotiating rules of the game
that are acceptable to all: I will emphasize the strategic dimension of their relationship.

1. Development Model and Interest Representation

In this section I intend to show, first, how the model of cooperation that had guaranteed
a stable form of development went through an accelerated process of transformation at
the beginning of the 1980s, and was cause for conflicts about the definition of a new
system of interest representation. More precisely, I intend to establish a partial link
between adjustment policies and changes in the party system.

After the Revolution, the lengthy process of consolidation of the new regime
slowly led to the constitution of specific forms of economic and political organization
in Mexico. The flexible nature of this process permitted adjustments at various
junctures at the same time that the existence of a broad consensus with regard to its
explicit and implicit rules of operation guaranteed its permanence. From an analytic
perspective, one can speak of the existence of a development model and of a system of
interest representation that is specific to post-revolutionary Mexico. Both models
complemented and reinforced each other: the proper functioning of the development
model permitted the production of those resources necessary for the maintenance of
the system of interest representation, while the system’s political stability acted as a
guarantee for economic growth. The relationship between the political and the eco-
nomic, on the one hand, and the political and the social on the other, managed to
maintain a sufficient level of expectations so as to ensure the reproduction of the rules
of the system. Thus, an efficient and durable model of cooperation was in place and
guided the actions of political and economic actors.

In the economic sphere, once the post-revolutionary State-building was Consoli-
dated during the 1930s and the Second World War, the development model produced
positive macroeconomic results and set the stage for a structural transformation of great
magnitude. In the three decades following the Second World War, the economy grew
at a rate which, on average, surpassed population growth by approximately three
percentage points per year and, beginning in the mid-1950s, in a context of very minor
fluctuations, exchange rate stability and very low inflation rates.

In this development model, economic growth and macroeconomic stability reinfor-

7 Most analysts agree to define the “classic period” as taking place between the beginning of the
Alemán (1946) and the end of the Díaz Ordaz (1968) administrations.
8 From a different perspective, Heredia summarizes well the workings of those transactions between
the model of development and the system of interest representation. See Heredia, 1991 and 1994.
9 For the characterization of the development model, see the “classic” works of Hansen, 1971, and
Solís, 1975.
ced each other in such a way that growth permitted the increase of fiscal revenues, which was necessitated by increased public spending, and generated the foreign exchange that this very growth demanded without having to make recourse to the depreciation of the peso. This meant that inflation could be kept under control. All these factors together created a climate in which opportunities for productive investment multiplied and left little room for financial speculation using potentially investible resources. This development model was complemented by a particular system of interest-representation and provided the latter with the material base it needed to sustain itself over time. In turn, this system produced "social peace", necessary to provide a climate of certainty to maintain the investment process that permitted economic growth.¹⁰

The central axis of this virtuous circle running from growth to stability was the import-substitution industrialization (ISI) process, which paradoxically became over time, the principal obstacle to a sustained expansion of the economy. Protectionism was the touchstone that kept the development model functioning. Although protectionism was ostensibly part of a development strategy that pretended to proceed from the substitution of simple to complex goods, historically protection was instituted for those who demanded it and simply in exchange for demonstrating that they could produce an industrial good. This fact produced at least two problems that eventually led to the exhaustion of the model: 1) protection became a precondition for not only the appearance but also the existence of protected industries; 2) the agriculture-industry relationship did not succeed in maintaining the expansion of the former sector once public investment in agriculture lost its momentum. Two factors finally revealed the problems associated with this model of development and were to lead the country into the debt crisis: first, the exhaustion of the dynamic momentum of ISI and, second, the consequences of the second oil shock and the changes in the international financial markets which led to the international crises in the early 1980s. The adjustment to these new international conditions would mark, in a decisive way, the Mexican economy for the rest of the decade.¹¹

In the political sphere, the system of interest representation produced a relative stability which, however, was not without its periods of tension. This was resolved by a mixture of selective repression and a process of inclusion and cooptation. The authoritarian nature of the system was undeniable, although it needs to be qualified as a moderate and pragmatic authoritarianism with a tendency to include certain social actors. Throughout its history, the regime developed a solid institutional network which assumed the existence of formal and informal rules which were adapted themselves to different political circumstances.¹²

¹⁰ This relation of mutual consolidation between the development model and the system of interest-representation was obviously the result of a process of institution-building understood in a broad sense: i.e. an incrementally produced agreement between the main political and economic actors on accepted norms and ways presiding over political transactions.

¹¹ For a detailed account of the causes of the crises, see Lustig, 1992, chap. 1, and Kaufman, 1988, chap. 2.

In the post-revolutionary period, authoritarianism operated on the basis of an intense political exchange. The regime's much celebrated capacity for inclusion was based on a system of limited and hierarchical political exchange that took place in those highly regulated and codified spaces of corporatism, clientelism and unequal party competition. The regime's tutelary function, concentrated in the Executive, was expressed in the government's ability to exert an influence over 1) the recognition of those actors who would participate in the formal political system; 2) the process of opening and closing that very system. The sphere of corporatist representation, principally articulated around the hegemonic party, was the pivot of the system of interest representation. There also existed a second subordinated and truncated space of citizen representation which defined itself in relation to the hegemonic party system and semi-competitive elections; within the historical particularities of Mexican authoritarianism its ability to sustain a democratic fiction stands out. From this was created a system of cooperation between principal political actors regulated by well-defined codes and rules that were understood by all. This system was the foundation for the period of the priísta peace.

In a manner similar to what happened with the development model, those factors that maintained the stability of the system of interest representation were converted into obstacles for its continuance. Corporatism operated on the principle that only a limited number of actors would be incorporated into the formal system. Insofar as the social structure and the nature of political demands became diversified, the rigidity of the system of interest representation impeded the incorporation of new actors and the processing of their demands; moreover, it was not in the interest of already-represented actors that the overall number of participants should increase. In order to maintain its tutelary function, the regime found itself faced with an obligation to manage increas-

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13 The relation between individuals or groups and the political system was based on a complex set of mediations, some of them being more institutionalized than others. Each of the political spaces mentioned above had its specific formal and informal rules known and used by the participating actors. I address the problem from a collective action perspective in Prud'homme, 1994a. Even though there exist many studies on corporatism in Mexico, very few of them focus on the analysis of the rules of the game and how distinctive actors used them to promote their interests. For an approximation to that approach see Durand, Prud'homme and Márquez, 1990. The same can be said about the special type of party representation and unequal competition in Mexico. There are many more good studies on clientelism that use that same perspective. Cornelius, 1975, and Lomnitz, 1977, are still classic studies on this issue.

14 For a recent and relevant discussion on the role of the presidential institution in Mexico, see Meyer, 1993.

15 I have discussed the nature of that tutelary's function in Prud'homme, 1994b, pp. 29-30.

16 Guerra emphasizes the paradoxal but functional relation between democratic constitutional norms and authoritarian ways of exercising power during the Porfirio Díaz regime at the end of the nineteenth century in Mexico. Most of his conclusions would stand for the post-revolutionary regime. See Guerra, 1986.

17 This was one of the arguments for the introduction of the political reform of 1977, which among other things allowed the existence of a more diversified party system. See Middlebrook, 1986.
ingly complex and fragile cooperation models, situated somewhere between State control and a blooming expression of pluralist interests. The *sexenio* of president De la Madrid can be characterized as a period of transformation and partial reintegration of the cooperation model: in the economic sphere, *Pacto de Solidaridad Económica* was signed after a five-year period of negotiations; in the political sphere, the search for new rules of cooperation between political forces remained on the negotiating agenda.\(^{18}\) The evident separation between the representation of economic and political interests, as though these were two completely distinct spheres, was a change that was acquiring increasing attention.\(^{19}\)

We need now to consider what was the specific impact of the transformations in the development model on one segment of the system of representation, namely, the party system.

As previously mentioned, it is important to emphasize the contradictory nature of the outcomes in the area of political representation which can result from measures of economic adjustment. The orientation of these outcomes depends on both the strategy pursued by different political and economic actors and the sphere from which these actors seek benefits.

The *sexenio* of president De la Madrid is fundamentally a period of rupture and attempts to reconstitute cooperative relations: it needs to be reevaluated in these terms. In the economic sphere, even though objectives appeared clear, the strategies for implementing adjustment policies were based on a system of trial and error: in this sense, one can speak of “erratic” economic policies. As Jaime Ros has noted in various studies, the three periods 1982-85, 1986-87 and 1987-88 were characterized by a similar number of distinct adjustment strategies.\(^{20}\) In the productive sphere, these periods were seen as separate moments in which different actors won or lost. But read from the political sphere, and more specifically from the party system, a unity between these separate periods was recovered which can help explain changes in the relations between actors. There are at least four ways in which the changes in the development model affected the shifts in partisan rivalry.

1) At the beginning of the 1980s, the geography of electoral dissidence and opposition was principally northern and *panista*. This was the product of an encounter

\(^{18}\) For an overall balance of De la Madrid’s *sexenio*, see Pérez and León, 1987, and Bazdresch *et al.*, 1992.

\(^{19}\) As long as the corporatist arena was prevailing in the system of interest representation and that part of it was also formally integrated into the hegemonic party, there was a close connection between economic and political representation. The signing of the *Pacto de Solidaridad Económica* in late 1987 as a separate sphere of bargaining between the main economic actors made more evident the weakness of political parties in the process of aggregation of economic interests. The party system that began to consolidate was having a limited, if not non-existent impact, on the intermediation of productive actors’ interests.

\(^{20}\) See Jaime Ros, 1992. For a balance of the adjustment policies and their effects on the economy, see Casar, 1994, chap. I.
between a discontented private sector that exerted pressure on the government by threatening to support the centre-right opposition and a renovated political party with a more aggressive posture with respect to canvassing for votes. On the one hand, we have an economic actor who, in order to have some influence on the design of the new economic model, ventured into the political arena. On the other hand, we have a political actor, the PAN, that wanted to take advantage of the effects of the economic crisis and errors in the adjustment policies in order to strengthen its political position and change the rules of the game in the party system. This coincidence of interests did not last for a long time, but it was important in that it promoted the PAN's presence and the competitiveness of the party system in the Northern region.21

2) The official unions, who were most affected by the adjustment policies, adopted a strategy that had a dual impact on the party system. In a positive way, they actively supported the adoption of a posture of closure and steadfastness in the face of increasing competitiveness in the party system. After all, they had always been opposed to the opening of the system of interest representation in the electoral sphere, opposing the concept of “political democracy”, in favor of one of “economic democracy”. Moreover, besides being badly affected by the economic policies, there did not appear to be any way for them to use the party system to put pressure on the government: the increase in partisan competitiveness meant a still larger loss of political power for the unions. In a negative way, the inability of the unions to ensure the functioning of the rules of exchange upon which corporatism rested—in a situation of economic crisis and steadily declining real wages, it was almost impossible for them to provide their rank-and-file with benefits—made the cardenista option appear all the more attractive.22

3) As a result of the State's reduced capacity to deliver social assistance, there was an increase in the autonomy of certain social organizations, which also ended up supporting the cardenista coalition in 1988.23

4) The divergences with regard to the development model contributed to splitting the Democratic Current from the heart of the PRI.24

21 For studies on the relations between entrepreneurs and the PAN in northern Mexico, see Guadarrama, 1987, and Mizrahi, 1994.

22 It is said that during the 1988 election some unions like the oil workers' union, Sindicato de los Trabajadores Petroleros de la República Mexicana, backed the dissident presidential candidacy of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas at the regional level. However, this should be seen more as an intent of bargaining within the system that went beyond the usually accepted limits than as a consistent support of the “cardenista” movement. As we know, this intent of pushing the game beyond the internal limits of the system ended up with the well publicized crackdown on the leadership of the oil workers' union at the very beginning of the Salinas administration. In general, during the De la Madrid sexenio, unions stood and acted against the opening of the party system. For more on their behavior during that era, see Bizberg, 1990.

23 A good case study on the urban popular movement can be found in Farrera, 1994. Tamayo, 1992, gives a brief history of how during the crisis of the eighties a lot of popular movements turned to representative democracy and party politics.

24 To date, Garrido, 1994, is the best published account of the splitting process within the PRI that led to Cárdenas' presidential candidacy.
The last three developments are important for explaining the emergence of an electoral option that initially retrieved a popular and distributive economic project that can be labelled as *populista* and through the mere fact of competing electorally, this option had a strong incidence in the cooperative relations of the party system.

Obviously, there are other factors that explain the increase in competitiveness in the party system, like the intrinsic dynamism of the political reforms, the diversification of the social structure and the changes in political culture.\(^{25}\)

Now, for the objectives of the present paper, the government of president De la Madrid represented a rupture in the existing model of cooperation: the hitherto self-reinforcing nature of the relationship between the development model and the system of interest representation started to produce negative effects, while the already established cooperative relations in both spheres experienced strong tensions. Even though a model of cooperation between productive agents was successfully consolidated at the end of the *sexenio*, this was not the case with regard to the party system.

In a certain way, one can speak of a process of "centrifugal diversification" of the economic and political actors. This process meant a multiplication of autonomous actors and of possible cooperative options. Those actors not only expressed different interests, they also favored different ways of processing their differences. Resources available from the political and economic spheres were used in an interchangeable way by various actors to enhance their negotiating positions in one or the other areas and propose models of cooperation that were advantageous to them. In the party system, this "centrifugal diversification" did not translate into democratization, given that one of the actors, the PRI, could continue to control the rules of the game. Neither could it mean the creation of a model of cooperation given that some of the actors could use a strategy of no-cooperation. In fact, this is what happened all through the Salinas administration within the Mexican party system: the existing basis for cooperation was not sufficient to guarantee the institutional processing of the electoral contest. At any moment, the political parties could use strategies of no-cooperation with reasonable expectations of winning at least something.

**II. Changes in a Hegemonic Party System**

Traditionally, elections were of secondary importance in the Mexican system of interest representation; they were more a ritual than anything else. However, electoral legislation was organized in such a way as to permit the display of the tutelary function of the regime all the way to the Executive level. With the electoral law of 1946, the *Secretaría de Gobernación* assumed control of 1) granting legal political organizations the right to register in order to run for election, and 2) the organization and supervision of the electoral process.\(^{26}\)


\(^{26}\) See Molinar, 1991.
In its classical version, the Mexican party system could be defined as the prototype of a hegemonic-pragmatic party system, which Sartori defined as a party system dominated by one party that does not allow a real competition for power: the other existing political parties do not have real possibilities to form the government. The obstacles to competition on an equal footing have more to do with the workings of the political system than with formal prohibitions. Guy Herment has labeled non-competitive elections as the instrument of hegemony of the party.

The political reform at the end of 1977 marked the beginning of a period of intensified change in the Mexican party system and in the electoral life of the country. Bit by bit, as I noted above, the electoral sphere began to assume a fundamental place in the system of interest representation and along the axis of political conflict.

How was this change reflected in the hegemonic party system?

First, it is important to note that the unequal nature of the competition in the system does not prevent secondary actors from gaining political ground. As unequal as it may be, political exchange is possible. In fact this is what allowed the opposition parties to gain ground in the electoral arena all through the eighties and nineties. But at the same time, this is what explains the dismantling of the anti-system coalition of opposition parties in Mexico after the 1988 elections and the creation of a new configuration of relations within the party system. Behind the apparent convergence of forces against the regime and electoral fraud, there existed a constellation of distinct interests in which the survival and relative positioning of some organizations against other political forces were at stake. From this perspective, the strategy of the opposition parties can be rationally explained by their respective objective position. The existence of a certain level of competition in the system permitted the PRI to reorganize its cooperative relations so that its “partners” achieved some successes but not enough as to directly threaten the hegemony of the PRI. Nevertheless, the management of these cooperative relations became more complicated and precarious and had to provide concrete gains.

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See Sartori, 1976, chap. 7.
For a detailed account of the reform, see Middlebrook, 1987.
However, it must be noted that the political reform of 1977 created a party system where the opposition parties were highly dependent on the State given that almost all of their revenues came from State subsidies—with the exception of the PAN that not until as late as 1987 accepted those subsidies—and their access to political representation was mainly through proportional representation. It is important to underline those features in order to understand how the nature of the party system limits the strategic behavior of opposition political parties. Under these circumstances, for an opposition political organization the costs of opting out are very high. Borrowing an expression coined by Cavarozzi, Mexican political parties could be labeled as “State-centric political parties”. See Cavarozzi, 1994.

Right after the 1988 presidential election, it seemed that the opposition forces were united in their protest against electoral fraud. But shortly after President Salinas’ inauguration, it became clear that opposition parties had very different interests that translated into different relations with the PRI and the government. For an account of the transactions between the main political parties, see Prud’homme, 1994b.
for the junior partners, as the relationship with the PAN throughout the whole of Salinas' administration illustrates.  

Second, parties had the possibility of monitoring their own action. In other words, they could employ strategies designed to increase their political capital: some strategies were better than others and some strategies were more compatible with their organizational characteristics. It was possible to choose between cooperation and no-cooperation strategies, for example. However, the points of access to power in the hegemonic party system are difficult for opposition parties to reach. In the Mexican case, strategies for cooperation and no-cooperation on the part of the principal opposition parties tended to adapt themselves to their organizational structure and to their geographical penetration at the national level. The PAN's "gradualism" corresponded to its consolidated presence in certain regions of the country and to its high level of internal institutionalization; paradoxically, its strong presence in certain regions prevented it from winning elections at the national level. The apparent "maximalism" of the PRD had much to do with its character as a charismatic party: despite its less consolidated regional presence, it had greater possibilities to win a national presidential election than the PAN.  

Finally, change in the relation between political parties took place incrementally within existing institutions. It was the product of partial agreements between political parties. These agreements continue to be part of the institutional political game and respond to the dynamics of the party system. Therefore their negotiation must initially include all political actors who participate within the formal political system. Legisla-
tive reform prevails over pact making as an instrument for the creation of agreements between actors. In recent years, the reform of the electoral legislation in Mexico has become an integral part of the process of measuring the relative strength of political parties, as important in fact as elections: we need to regard both processes as two moments in the same cycle.

In the Mexican case, the dynamic of change in the hegemonic party system produced at least three effects that made it difficult to obtain general agreements with regard to the rules of the game.

1) The problem can be understood as one of compatibility between cooperation and the maximization of gains between actors. In effect, as transpires in especially long processes of transition, the political parties do not yet appear disposed to distinguish between the acceptance of procedures and the acceptance of the results of said procedures. They are not willing to give up immediate benefits for future rewards. This translates into confusion between strategies for negotiation of the rules of the game and strategies for the accumulation of political power.

In this situation, the party system generates incentives that allow the principal political formations to assume that they can win so much or more without a consensual agreement with regards to the rules of the game than with such an agreement. In this way, the impossibility of arriving at a satisfactory agreement for all parties concerned becomes an element, among others, in the strategies used to obtain power. Furthermore, for various reasons, the parties developed an interest in processing conflicts outside of the agreed-upon rules. The resolution of state electoral conflicts in Mexico during the last sexenio illustrates this well: in San Luis Potosí, Guanajuato, Michoacán and Yucatán, electoral conflicts were resolved through political negotiation between political forces, in which the capacity for mobilization of the parties weighed very heavily in the dénouement.

2) The agreed-upon rules of the game between some of the actors were more ephemeral guarantees that confirmed the state of political relations between those who subscribed to them, than norms that maintained an efficient and formal institutionalization. In this way, they reflected fragile cooperative relations that were continually threatened by the prospects of no-cooperation: even though the last reform (May 1994) has been approved by the three main political parties, there is still no efficient and

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35 One of the features of Mexico’s very long and slow transition to democracy is that change has taken place within the existing constitutional framework. It would be difficult to identify a breaking point between the authoritarian regime and a democratic regime to come.

36 It is a classical problem in the literature on transition to democracy, well addressed in Przeworski, 1991, chap. 1.

37 This process came to be known ironically as “concertaciones”, an expression invented from the fusion of the words “concertación”, which means “concerted agreement”, and “cesión” which can be translated as “surrender”. It refers to a situation where dubiously elected PRI officials had to resign from their positions after a negotiation between the government and the affected and mobilized opposition party.
lasting model of cooperation between political parties. Since 1986, each legislature has
produced a substantial electoral reform: the last legislature (1991-1994) has succeeded
in producing two. Since the announcement of the *Pacto de Los Pinos* (January 1995), it
is known that one of the main items on this legislature's agenda will be the approval
of a “definitive” electoral reform. In this way, a cycle of reform-elections-reform has
emerged, one which operates on a basis of trial and error and which produces a recurring
pattern of interaction between political forces in which cooperation alternates with
no-cooperation.

In fact, in order to comprehend accurately the power relations between the political
parties in Mexico, it is impo it to consider this cycle in its entirety. If one examines
the amendments made to legislation since 1988, it is possible to identify the immediate
interests of the parties which approved them. Thus, the reforms approved between 1988
and 1993 reveal four types of intervention on the part of the legislator that reflect as
many patterns of interaction between parties.

A first area of operation of the legislation that does not usually give rise to tensions,
is that related to the regulation of aspects of the electoral process not previously
governed by legislation: the measures adopted in 1993 regarding party financing and
the cap on campaign spending by candidates are good examples.

A second area of operation is more problematic in that it relates to activities for
which the opposition forces are seeking reduced governmental influence and control.
Tensions are strong and the proposed solutions tend to be very divergent. However,
from the perspective of consolidating independent and reputable electoral institutions,
progress in this area is slow but constant.

A third area of application of the reforms can be characterized by a process of
“one step forward, two steps back”, depending on the political circumstances. For
example, each reform between 1986 and 1993 modified the rules for political represen-
tation: the link between territorial and proportional representation, the number of
representatives in Congress, the conditions governing the maintenance of the registry
of parties and access to proportionally-elected posts, the definition of the rules of the
majority and the requirements to form coalitions. The negotiation process ended up
providing immediate guarantees to all those who were prepared to participate in the
agreements: guarantees for the majority party so that it might continue to expect that

38 In 1986, at the end of President De la Madrid’s administration, there was a constitutional reform
in electoral matters that modified the assignation of seats in the Congress. As part of the same discussion,
in February of 1987, the *Código Federal Electoral* was also reformed. Those were the rules that governed
the 1988 presidential election. In 1990, under the Salinas administration, the electoral law was again
substantially modified after a long negotiation with the opposition parties. Known as *Código Federal de
Instituciones y Procesos Electorales* (Cofipe), the new law presided over the 1991 national legislative
election. In September of 1993, a substantial modification to Cofipe was approved by all political parties
with the exception of the PRD: these new norms were supposed to govern the 1994 presidential election.
It is understood that all of these reforms were the result of the failure of the previous ones to guarantee
clean elections and undisputed results. For a detailed account of the negotiations and the content of the
reforms, see Prud’homme, 1994c.
it would maintain this status, guarantees for smaller parties so that they could at least continue to exist, and guarantees for the principal party of the opposition so that it would no longer be underrepresented.

The fourth area of operation of the reforms had a smaller impact on the transformation of the party system and the electoral regime. However it did show signs of contributing to the creation of a political class with an *esprit de corps* that extended well beyond partisan divisions: in general, the measures designed to increase State subsidies for parties enjoyed the support of all sectors.

This pattern that prevailed throughout most of the Salinas administration permitted relations of cooperation between the PRI, the PAN and the smaller "satellite" parties. The PRD excluded itself from the results of the negotiation preferring a strategy of no-cooperation. Obviously, even though its main demands were not fully incorporated into the reforms, as a participant in the party system, it also benefited from them. The situation evolved a few months before the 1994 presidential election towards what can be called relations of limited cooperation.

3) The difficulty with which an agreement regarding the rules of the game could be reached reflected a larger problem related to the creation of a political class in which the members of the various political clusters would recognize that, beyond their obvious divergences of opinions, they shared common interests regarding procedures and the manner of exercising political activity. For the time being, the dynamic of change in the hegemonic party system, with all the particularities we have highlighted above, did not provide internal incentives to overcome the many differences. The only possibility for change from within the party system seemed to rest with the political collapse of one of the forces which was polarizing the negotiations, the PRI or the PRD: this

39 Traditionally in Mexico the concept of political class referred to prominent members of the PRI. As long as political exchange took place mainly within the PRI, it was an adequate use of the concept. All those *pristia* politicians had a good knowledge of the formal and informal accepted rules of the game, shared overall common interests, abided by the rules of political recruitment and were ready to face the sanctions associated with the breaking of the rules. The diversification of political options created a problem in terms of the acceptance of the integration of a new political class. From this perspective the consolidation of a model of cooperation within the party system must rest on the existence of accepted rules of the game, on the consciousness of an overall common interest and on accepted processes of political recruitment. In other words, this model must rest on a new professionalization of politicians.

40 This internal logic provided only for the maintenance of the PRI's dominance and a slow PAN advance. The relation of cooperation between these two political forces was possible as long as PRD was excluded from the agreements. The PAN was using the possibility of an alliance with the PRD in order to strengthen its bargaining position. The PRI was using the possibility of reaching legislative agreements with the PAN and other political parties in order to block the formation of an anti-system coalition and to isolate the PRD more. And the PRD, as a "free-rider", was taking advantage of the limited progress in the electoral legislation without discarding the possibility of mobilizing against the inequity of the electoral system, which was where its real force rested. Given those circumstances, the party system was not offering incentives for reaching an inclusive agreement on the rules of the game. As I have argued above, the dynamic of the party system during the Salinas administration was promoting incentives that encouraged the political parties not to reach a consensual agreement on the rules of the game.
possibility seemed unlikely in the pre-1994 elections context. Only events external to the party system, such as the uprising in Chiapas, could push the parties to meet on a common ground in order to defend certain political practices. In fact, at the end of March 1994, this situation, external to the party system, led to interpartisan negotiations that produced an agreement on a new electoral reform on the part of the majority of the deputies of the three major political forces in the country. The nature of the negotiations that came to be known as negociaciones de Barcelona meant per se a change in the party system. The small satellite parties, a folklorical artefact of the traditional Mexican party system, were virtually excluded from the negotiations and, with the exception of the newly created Partido del Trabajo, were wiped off the political map after the August elections. From the beginning of these last negotiations, it was clear that the installation of a model of limited cooperation in the party system meant the consolidation of a three party system. But even so, the PRD’s presidential candidate and an important group of deputies from its parliamentary wing declared themselves to be opposed to the reforms, thus maintaining the possibility for future strategies of no-cooperation. This possibility seemed more remote after the 1994 presidential election that gave little ground for the organization of protests against electoral fraud, although most observers agreed upon the need to pursue further the reform of electoral institutions. The persistence of the external threat of destabilization created by the rebellion in Chiapas compelled the three main political parties to try to reach an agreement on new rules of the game. In January 1995, President Zedillo and the leaders of these political formations announced the Pacto de los Pinos in which they were committing themselves to reach soon a definitive electoral reform. It seems that at last those political parties realized that they had a common interest that was more important than their differences. It is possible to foresee the installation of a new model of cooperation within the party system in the near future.

In this section, I have attempted to demonstrate in what way the problem of cooperation in the Mexican party system manifested itself during the Salinas administration. My argument is that although it has been possible to establish partial cooperative relations over the negotiation of the rules of the game between some political parties, its realization depended on the possibility of no-cooperation and the exclusion of one of the main political actors, the PRD. In this way, there was no efficient and stable model of cooperation. The state of the system encouraged the use of extra-institutional resources for conflict resolution. And the negotiation strategies for new rules of the game used by the different parties continued to be associated with their respective strategies for the attainment of power. By itself, the dynamic prevailing in the party

41 In a short but suggestive article, Antonio Camou refers to the positive and negative conditions that lead different actors in a polity to agree upon democratic rules of the game. In the case of the Mexican party system, I prefer to use the terms internal and external incentives, the former appearing as a threat to the survival of the party system as a whole. See Camou, 1992.

42 Obviously, the possibility of using strategies of no-cooperation remains. However, after March of 1994, currents in favor of strategies of cooperation dominated the three main political parties.
system could not provide the required incentives to promote an agreement between major political parties on the rules of the game. Only factors external to the party system that were endangering its own survival were able to compel the parties towards limited cooperation.

**Conclusion**

Mexico has been experiencing two parallel processes of transformation that are characterized first, in the economic sphere, by the implementation of adjustment policies and, secondly, in the political sphere, by pressures for the liberalization of the system of interest representation. In this paper, I have been interested in ascertaining the effects of both of these changes for one particular aspect of the system of interest representation: the party system.

Behind the processes of transformation already mentioned, there is the outline of a more general problem, namely cooperation between actors and more particularly the consolidation of an efficient and long-lasting model of cooperation for those actors. Until the end of the 1970s, it was possible to identify both a model of development and a system of interest representation that were self-reinforcing and that maintained a stable model of cooperation. The 1980s are noteworthy for the rupture that took place in both spheres and for the attempts to reconfigure cooperative relations. A process of "centrifugal diversification" arose, in which autonomous actors and potential cooperation options multiplied: these options are not necessarily compatible with each other. Although the model of cooperation between productive agents was repaired by the end of the 1980s, the same success did not occur in the party system confirming the existence of a wider gap between the representation of economic and political interests. The latter's internal dynamic was permeated by an alternation between strategies of cooperation and no-cooperation in which negotiations of the rules of the game were confused with strategies for attaining power. In this context, the party system tended to generate incentives for the use of extra-institutional resources for purposes of conflict resolution. Only when an external threat —the Chiapas rebellion— to the survival of the party system as a way of doing politics appeared at the beginning of 1994, did political parties feel obliged to install a model of limited cooperation.

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