

THE TIES THAT BIND:
"Silent Integration" and Conflict Regulation
in U.S.-Mexican Relations*

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THE CHALLENGE OF INTERDEPENDENCE: MEXICO AND THE UNITED STATES. By the Bilateral Commission on the Future of United States–Mexican Relations. (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1989. Pp. 238. \$14.95 paper.)

MEXICO AND THE UNITED STATES: MANAGING THE RELATIONSHIP. Edited by Riordan Roett. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1988. Pp. 266. \$25.00 paper.)

The multiple linkages between Mexico and the United States constitute perhaps the most complex bilateral foreign-policy relationship. Bound by a two-thousand-mile border and a complicated, often conflictive history, the two countries are nevertheless divided by cultural and linguistic differences, sharply contrasting historical perspectives, and their dramatically different positions in the international political economy. Many bilateral dilemmas confront Mexico and the United States, including problems associated with Mexico's foreign debt, reliance on U.S. investment and technology, large-scale undocumented migration from Mexico to the United States, trade, and drug smuggling. These problems are distinctive primarily because of the extent to which foreign-policy concerns coincide with pressing domestic social, economic, and political issues.

The two books under review differ substantially in their format. The *Challenge of Interdependence* is the official report of the Bilateral Commission on the Future of United States–Mexican Relations (made up of nine Mexican and nine U.S. past and current public officials, business and labor leaders, educators, and writers).¹ The volume edited by Riordan

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1. The report's principal authors are Rosario Green and Peter H. Smith. Five collections of background papers prepared for the Bilateral Commission were published by the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies at the University of California, San Diego, in 1989: *Images of Mexico in the United States*, edited by John W. Coatsworth and Carlos Rico; *The Economics of Interdepen-*

Roett, *Mexico and the United States: Managing the Relationship*, brings together essays by fifteen specialists (seven from Mexico and eight from the United States) on Mexican politics and economic development and U.S. and Mexican foreign policy. Nonetheless, the two volumes address a common set of issues and a broad audience, ranging from academic specialists to members of the foreign-policy, labor, and business communities. These works make significant contributions to the field because they reflect diverse perspectives held by observers in each country, while stressing the special importance of bilateral approaches to increasingly complex problems. Together they offer outstanding analyses of key problems in U.S.-Mexican relations and the challenges facing the two countries in the 1990s.

The central issue emerging out of recent literature on U.S.-Mexican relations is whether the contemporary relationship between Mexico and the United States should be characterized as one of "dependence" or "interdependence." This review essay will begin by evaluating that theoretical question and will then analyze economic, migration, and drug problems and their implications for bilateral relations. The discussion in this section poses two questions. First, are the multiple linkages between Mexico and the United States sufficiently important to create mutual vulnerability to actions taken by the bilateral partner? Second, have recent developments produced a significant increase in the Mexican government's bargaining leverage over key issues on the bilateral agenda? The third section of this essay will examine the institutional framework of U.S.-Mexican relations, focusing specifically on the recommendations offered by the Bilateral Commission and contributors to the Roett volume for procedural and organizational reforms in the conduct of bilateral affairs.

DEFINING THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP

The Bilateral Commission and the contributors to the Roett volume all agree that economic issues constitute the core of the bilateral relationship. For Mexico, the United States accounted for 63 percent of all exports and 67 percent of all imports during the period between 1980 and 1988, proportions that increased steadily during these years to reach 73

dence: Mexico and the United States, edited by William Glade and Cassio Luiselli; *Mexican Migration to the United States: Origins, Consequences, and Policy Options*, edited by Wayne A. Cornelius and Jorge A. Bustamante; *The Drug Connection in U.S.-Mexican Relations*, edited by Guadalupe González and Marta Tienda; and *Foreign Policy in U.S.-Mexican Relations*, edited by Rosario Green and Peter H. Smith.

percent of exports and 75 percent of imports by 1988.² The United States is also Mexico's largest source of private investment, bank loans, and technology, an impact magnified by the fact that much U.S. investment and technology are concentrated in the most dynamic sectors of the Mexican economy. For the United States, Mexico is its third-largest trading partner (after Canada and Japan), although it accounted for only 6 percent of all U.S. exports and 5 percent of all U.S. imports between 1980 and 1988.³ In 1988, U.S. investments in Mexico represented only 11 percent of all U.S. direct foreign investment in Latin America and the Caribbean.⁴ Mexico's economic importance looms substantially larger in the Southwest, where Mexican workers and border trade and industry are vital to the region's economic health. In addition, Mexico provided 16 percent of all U.S. crude oil imports between 1980 and 1987.⁵ Most important, "silent integration" of the Mexican and U.S. economies intensified throughout the 1980s as a result of expanded flows of bilateral trade, capital, energy, labor, and tourists. This trend has led to efforts to negotiate a bilateral free-trade agreement in the early 1990s.⁶

Despite considerable continuity in the economic underpinnings of U.S.-Mexican relations, an important shift has occurred in the way in which many foreign-policy analysts conceptualize the bilateral relationship. Through the 1970s, the predominant approach focused on Mexico's multifaceted dependence on the United States. The late Donald Wyman examined U.S.-Mexican diplomatic conflicts between 1920 and 1975 and concluded that the bilateral relationship should be characterized as one of dependence rather than interdependence. According to his argument, although the United States has not used military force to settle disputes since 1920 and multiple linkages connect the two societies, economic issues consistently were given highest priority on the bilateral agenda and most U.S.-Mexican governmental contacts during conflicts were channeled through the representatives of the two countries' foreign of-

2. International Monetary Fund, *Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook, 1987* (Washington, D.C.: IMF, 1987), 283; and also *Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook, 1989* (Washington, D.C.: IMF, 1989), 279. Fuel products (crude petroleum, petroleum products, natural gas, and electricity) accounted for an average of 41 percent of all Mexican exports to the United States between 1980 and 1987, although this percentage fell steadily from 55 percent in 1982 to 19 percent in 1987. See Central Intelligence Agency, Directorate of Intelligence, *OECD Trade with Mexico and Central America* (Washington, D.C.: CIA, 1989), t. 14, p. 54.

3. *Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook, 1987*, 404-5; and *Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook, 1989*, 402-3.

4. *Survey of Current Business* 69 (Aug. 1989):85, t. 29. This periodical is published by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis.

5. U.S. Department of Commerce, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1989* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1989), t. 946.

6. See "Free-Trade Talks with U.S. Set Off Debate in Mexico," *New York Times*, 29 Mar. 1990, p. 1; "Free-Trade Talks Seen for Mexico," *New York Times*, 11 June 1990, pp. C1, 6; and "U.S. and Mexicans Cautiously Back Free-Trade Idea," *New York Times*, 12 June 1990, p. 1.

fices.⁷ Wyman summarized his position in this way, "In the decades after World War II, the governments of the United States and Mexico wanted something from each other, and they both sought to minimize conflict and maximize cooperation. But Mexico was much the more sensitive party in the relationship, and it was much more vulnerable to the potentially adverse impact of U.S. policies than the United States was to any possible effects of Mexican policies."⁸

Mexican analysts have typically been even more inclined than their U.S. counterparts to emphasize the underlying economic basis of the relationship and the extent to which Mexican dependence on U.S. markets, capital, and technology constrains Mexico in negotiating with the United States. Whatever the benefits that Mexico may derive from geographical contiguity, this perspective views the overall economic and political vulnerability resulting from such dependence as a structural limitation on full national sovereignty.⁹ Despite Mexico's more active foreign policy vis-à-vis North-South issues and Central America and concerted efforts to use its petroleum resources to enhance bargaining leverage in regional and international affairs, it was one of the few Latin American countries that failed to diversify its external economic relations during the 1970s.¹⁰ Instead, Mexico's reliance on U.S. markets and capital actually increased during the 1980s.

In contrast to these characterizations of the bilateral relationship, the two books reviewed here emphasize the extent of "interdependence" between Mexico and the United States. The Bilateral Commission particularly stresses "the *interconnectedness* of the two societies" (p. 5, emphasis in original) and observes, "The two nations have become more and more interdependent. What happens in one country affects the other directly, and both are undergoing profound changes—in society, politics, and economics" (p. 6). Although the commission fully acknowledges the asym-

7. Donald L. Wyman, "Dependence and Conflict: U.S. Relations with Mexico, 1920–1975," in *Diplomatic Dispute: U.S. Conflict with Iran, Japan, and Mexico*, edited by Robert L. Paarlberg (Cambridge, Mass.: Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1978), 87–90. Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye argue that "complex interdependence" has three main characteristics: multiple channels connect societies and governments; the agenda of interstate relationships consists of multiple issues that are not arranged in a clear or consistent hierarchy; and military force is not used to determine the outcome of conflicts. See Keohane and Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown, 1977), 24–25.

8. Wyman, "Dependence and Conflict," 97.

9. See, for example, Mario Ojeda, *México: el surgimiento de una política exterior activa* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1986), 19–24. Mexico's dependence on the United States does not necessarily imply that the U.S. government has unqualified influence in bilateral relations.

10. Kevin J. Middlebrook and Carlos Rico, "The United States and Latin America in the 1980s: Change, Complexity, and Contending Perspectives," in *The United States and Latin America in the 1980s: Contending Perspectives on a Decade of Crisis*, edited by Kevin J. Middlebrook and Carlos Rico (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986), 14–16.

metry pervading bilateral exchanges and makes no assumptions concerning the compatibility of U.S. and Mexican interests, it nevertheless highlights developments that make bilateral relations increasingly complex and politically contentious for both countries. Three compounding trends can be cited: expansion of the bilateral agenda to include such topics as Mexican policy toward Central America in addition to more traditional issues such as trade, investment, energy, debt, migration, and drug smuggling; the shifting locus of decision making, including a growing range of (especially U.S.) nongovernmental actors involved in bilateral affairs and the declining ability of government-to-government negotiations to resolve definitively key bilateral problems; and the greater impact of international events on U.S.-Mexican affairs (pp. 26–30).

Debate concerning the appropriate way to conceptualize U.S.-Mexican relations is not new, but it remains important for both theoretical and practical reasons.¹¹ The Bilateral Commission and contributors to the Roett volume may use the term *interdependence* simply to suggest a preference for conducting U.S.-Mexican relations on the basis of formal equality between sovereign states, or analysts may seek to encourage changes in U.S. government behavior to reflect their own perception of the importance of relations with Mexico. If the case for interdependence is to be convincing, however, two major points must be demonstrated: that the multiple linkages existing between Mexico and the United States are significant enough to create mutual vulnerability to actions taken by the bilateral partner; and that the potential influence inherent in such linkages permits the Mexican government significant bargaining power over key issues on the bilateral agenda.¹² If these conditions obtain, the U.S.-Mexican relationship would constitute the first case in which the declining utility of force in international affairs and changes in the international division of labor have transformed relations between an industrialized and a developing country. At a practical level, interdependence between Mexico and the United States would make a long-standing U.S. preference for unilateral initiatives increasingly risky. It would also demand procedural and organizational changes in the conduct of bilateral relations.

11. For an excellent analysis of the use of interdependence rhetoric in U.S.-Mexican relations, see Carlos Rico F., "The Future of Mexican-U.S. Relations and the Limits of the Rhetoric of 'Interdependence,'" in *Mexican-U.S. Relations: Conflict and Convergence*, edited by Carlos Vásquez and Manuel García y Griego (Los Angeles, Calif.: Chicano Studies Research Center and Latin American Center, University of California, Los Angeles, 1983), 127–74.

12. For a general discussion of vulnerability and bargaining power, see Keohane and Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, chaps. 1–2; and James A. Caporaso, "Dependence, Dependency, and Power in the Global System: A Structural and Behavioral Analysis," *International Organization* 32, no. 1 (Winter 1978):13–43.

“SILENT INTEGRATION”: ECONOMICS, MIGRATION, AND DRUGS

Let us now examine economic, migration, and drug issues to determine whether the current bilateral relationship does in fact constitute an example of interdependence.

Economic Issues

Substantial portions of the Bilateral Commission's report and the Roett collection are devoted to examining the main economic issues on the bilateral agenda. The commission devoted close attention to economic developments in Mexico and the United States (including a discussion of debt, trade, and investment in terms of broader economic trends affecting capital markets, protectionism, and international competitiveness) and their implications for U.S.-Mexican relations. This approach is particularly valuable—and a refreshing departure from studies that analyze economic problems facing Mexico and possible U.S. policy responses without reference to the domestic situation in the United States. Similarly, contributions to the Roett volume by José Casar (on foreign direct investment in Mexico), León Bendesky as well as Víctor Godínez and Thomas Trebat (on Mexico's foreign debt), and Brian Bennett (on U.S.-Mexican trade relations) compose an excellent overview of the economic bases of bilateral relations. Riordan Roett's introductory chapter places these discussions in context by highlighting recent economic developments in the global economy.¹³

The Bilateral Commission and several contributors to the Roett volume recommend specific strategies for improving economic relations between Mexico and the United States. For example, for Mexico to achieve sustainable economic growth and satisfy basic social needs and its financial obligations, the commission urges the Mexican government to continue its recent policies of tariff reduction, reprivatization, and economic liberalization. The report also makes several other recommendations: that Mexico adopt a more open and consistent policy toward new foreign investment (with special emphasis on attracting investment in manufactured exports, tourism, and in-bond industries); that the country reduce its foreign debt by purchasing at a discount debt obligations held by private banks; and that it promote sector-specific free-trade agreements with the United States.

Yet few of these analyses examine what impact economic linkages have on the overall character of bilateral relations or on the Mexican government's future bargaining leverage with the United States. Casar's

13. Neither book includes a section on energy issues, a topic that less than a decade ago was *de rigueur* in discussions of U.S.-Mexican economic relations.

examination of Mexican efforts to regulate direct foreign investment since 1970 shows that the Mexican state has been able to impose restrictions on the behavior of transnational corporations only in those sectors where domestic firms are strong. He argues that Mexico's policy in this area (which he describes as variations within "cautious welcome" parameters) has been less important in determining actual investment flows than such macroeconomic variables as the rate of growth and the balance of payments situation. Similarly, the Bilateral Commission suggests that the Mexican government's recent emphasis on trade liberalization and economic growth led by export production may make Mexico more vulnerable to U.S. cyclical economic downturns and structural adjustments by furthering Mexico's *de facto* integration with the U.S. economy.

One might summarize these views by noting that while greater integration between the Mexican and U.S. economies makes the United States more sensitive (particularly at the regional level) to developments across the border, Mexico is increasingly reliant on access to U.S. markets, capital, and technology. Thus "silent integration" does not necessarily produce complementarities that erode the asymmetry of the relationship, reduce conflict, or provide the Mexican government with additional bargaining power in negotiating with the United States on economic issues. Indeed, the growing number of nongovernmental groups involved in such matters may have weakened the Mexican government's traditionally centralized control over foreign affairs. These factors are likely to affect the conduct and outcome of government-to-government negotiations over a projected bilateral free-trade agreement.

Migration

The Bilateral Commission's report and essays by Jorge Bustamante and Michael Teitelbaum in the Roett volume provide outstanding analyses of the dimensions and consequences of Mexican legal and illegal immigration to the United States. They address such diverse topics as the historical roots of the phenomenon, the number of people involved at different times, the social origins of migrants, their paths of entry and geographical and economic destinations, the benefits and costs of such migration to both Mexico and the United States, and the assimilation problems facing recent immigrants. The Bilateral Commission also discusses the evolution of U.S. immigration policy over time and such issues as quotas, temporary worker permits, enforcement strategies, employer sanctions, and amnesty. The commission report stresses the fact that large-scale temporary and permanent Mexican immigration to the United States results primarily from the sharply unequal levels of economic development in the two countries, although the report also recognizes that shifts in U.S. law

(particularly emphasis since 1965 on family reunification rather than labor certification) have encouraged illegal immigration.

The commission reports that because of increasingly well-established social networks in both "sending" and "receiving" communities, the migrant flow is not very sensitive to legal controls. Although the larger volume of migration and the greater residential segregation of Mexican immigrants have heightened U.S. perceptions of an "immigrant problem," the magnitude of the phenomenon is unlikely to be altered substantially by government policy, at least in the short- and medium-term. Indeed, except for its call for the Mexican government to promote employment in major sending areas, the Bilateral Commission's recommendations on this issue are designed mainly to reduce the tensions that inevitably arise over migration rather than to "solve" the problem. Although a sudden disruption of Mexican migration would produce severe regional stress on both sides of the border, the contributions on migration in the two books under review suggest that Mexico remains more vulnerable to sharp policy shifts in the United States. As a result, the Mexican government has little bargaining power on this issue.¹⁴

Drugs

No other topic on the bilateral agenda in the late 1980s was as politically disruptive as the problem of drug smuggling. The contributions by Samuel del Villar and Gregory Trevorton to Roett's *Mexico and the United States* facilitate public understanding of this volatile issue by outlining the historical origins and overall dimensions of the problem and the extent of the Mexican government's commitment to its "Campaña Permanente contra el Narcotráfico." They also detail the costs of Mexico's support for a U.S.-defined antidrug policy: one-third of Mexico's military budget and one-half of the federal attorney general's budget, corruption of government agencies, and the deaths of many army and law enforcement personnel. Both analysts emphasize the contradiction between general tolerance of domestic drug consumption in the United States and an intrusive U.S. governmental policy advocating the eradication of marijuana and heroin production in Mexico. They call for shifting U.S. policy from "supply" to "demand" problems and immobilizing criminal organizations involved in the drug trade.

The Bilateral Commission offers a comprehensive examination of the evolution of the drug problem since the 1960s, focusing on patterns of consumption in the United States, the structure of drug production in

14. The Bilateral Commission suggests that the Mexican government might in the future encourage Mexican-Americans to lobby for changes in U.S. immigration policy that are favorable to Mexico (p. 162).

Mexico, and the policy record in this area. Especially useful are the commission's comparative analysis of European efforts at drug control and its emphatic conclusion that immigration and drug smuggling are separate issues: drugs are not generally transported by land, and few Mexican migrants to the United States transport drugs. The commission argues that policymakers, when addressing a bilateral problem with divergent implications for a producer and a consumer country, should recognize that both governments have a joint responsibility for responding to the drug problem and should adhere to the principles of proportionality and reciprocity in resources employed and antidrug measures adopted in both countries. The report's specific recommendations include proposals for drug education, a joint commission to study the problem, and the organization of eradication teams controlled by a multilateral agency. The Bilateral Commission opposes drug legalization and the use of the U.S. military in programs to intercept drugs along the border with Mexico.¹⁵

Two drug-related issues have produced high levels of tension in bilateral relations: the continuing diplomatic controversy over the alleged involvement of Mexican police officials in the torture and murder of Enrique Camarena (an employee of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency working in Guadalajara)¹⁶ in 1985, and the requirement of the 1986 Anti-Drug Abuse Act that U.S. assistance to Mexico and other countries be based on annual certification of their drug-control programs. Mexico's role in producing and transporting drugs and strong U.S. pressures on Mexico to comply with its "supply-side" approach to the drug problem both indicate considerable mutual vulnerability to actions taken by the bilateral partners. Comments in this regard by the Bilateral Commission, del Villar, and Treverton suggest that the drug issue offers little basis for expanded Mexican bargaining leverage in bilateral affairs. But as long as the U.S. government fails to resolve the problem of domestic drug consumption, the United States must necessarily rely on Mexico's committing substantial resources to fight drug production and smuggling. Over time, such reliance might result in some additional Mexican bargaining leverage in bilateral relations.

15. In 1988 the United States deployed National Guard units in antidrug efforts at seven major border points, and in November 1989, the U.S. government created "Joint Task Force Six" (based in El Paso, Texas) under the command of the U.S. Army to interdict drug smuggling along the Mexican border. Both actions prompted strong protests in Mexico. See "Sovereignty Hinders U.S.-Mexican Drug Alliance," *New York Times*, 25 Feb. 1990, p. 18.

16. "Mexico Calls Slain U.S. Drug Agent a Trafficker," *New York Times*, 16 Jan. 1990, p. 12; "2 Ex-Mexican Officials Charged in '85 Murder of U.S. Drug Agent," *New York Times*, 1 Feb. 1990, p. 1; "U.S. Charges in Drug Agent's Death: New Friction," *New York Times*, 2 Feb. 1990, p. 10; "Mexico Says Suspect's Seizure Imperils Aid to U.S. on Drugs," *New York Times*, 20 Apr. 1990, p. 1; "Justice Dept. Scrambles to Explain Mexico Abduction," *New York Times*, 27 May 1990, p. 14.

This assessment of economic, migration, and drug issues suggests that the overall bilateral relationship is appropriately characterized as one of continued Mexican dependence on the United States rather than interdependence. Although the United States is becoming more sensitive to developments in Mexico and the Mexican government at times enjoys real negotiating leverage on some bilateral issues, Mexico remains highly vulnerable to shifts in U.S. policy in each of these areas.¹⁷ The absence of unified U.S. government control across different issue areas and increasingly complex linkages between the two societies do not necessarily produce interdependence.

The considerable asymmetry that pervades U.S.-Mexican relations is tempered only by the threat that serious political instability in Mexico would pose to vital U.S. interests, perhaps resulting in challenges to private business, disruption of petroleum exports, a default on debt payments, and large-scale emigration.¹⁸ Thus long-standing U.S. concerns with Mexican stability offer the Mexican government only a peculiar form of negative leverage in bargaining with the United States: the possibility of domestic instability in Mexico may constitute an implicit part of bilateral negotiations on a particular issue, but no Mexican administration could afford to promote domestic sociopolitical unrest in a conscious effort to win concessions from its U.S. counterpart.

It is nevertheless likely that domestic political change in Mexico will become an increasingly important issue in bilateral affairs. Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the leader of the opposition Partido de la Revolución Democrática, argues that the Carlos Salinas de Gortari administration (1988–1994) “offered the United States an implicit deal: Mexico would implement the economic reforms the United States had always wanted, but the United States would accept the existing political system, warts and all.”¹⁹ Yet widespread democratization in Latin America in the last decade and growing pressures for political change within Mexico suggest that even if the Mexican government preferred an implicit bargain of this kind, it would probably be untenable over the medium and long term.

As domestic sociopolitical forces mobilize in Mexico in support of

17. Keohane and Nye distinguish between sensitivity and vulnerability. See their *Power and Interdependence*, 12–15.

18. Recent examinations of domestic Mexican politics can be found in *Mexico's Alternative Political Futures*, edited by Wayne A. Cornelius, Judith Gentleman, and Peter H. Smith (La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1989); *Prospects for Mexico*, edited by George W. Grayson (Washington, D.C.: Foreign Service Institute, 1988); *Mexican Politics in Transition*, edited by Judith Gentleman (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1987); and Roderic A. Camp, *Mexico's Political Stability: The Next Five Years* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1986). With the partial exceptions of the Grayson and Camp volumes, these books do not address the implications of political change in Mexico for U.S.-Mexican relations.

19. Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, “Misunderstanding Mexico,” *Foreign Policy* 78 (Spring 1990): 113–30.

democratization and as Mexican elections become more hotly contested, U.S. concerns regarding the direction of internal political change are likely to assume more prominence on the bilateral agenda. The Mexican government will necessarily resist any U.S. attempt to promote such change as a violation of the principle of nonintervention, and efforts by the United States to link concessions on such issues as immigration policy or debt assistance to political liberalization could produce a serious backlash.²⁰ Nevertheless, opposition groups within Mexico on both the left and the right are now making concerted appeals to public and elite opinion in the United States on such issues as electoral fraud.²¹ As Sergio Aguayo and Bruce Bagley suggest in their contributions to the Roett volume, the tension between U.S. preference for democratic reform and its central interest in continued stability in Mexico may become a larger part of bilateral relations in the future.²²

THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF U.S.-MEXICAN RELATIONS

Despite the growing complexity of bilateral linkages and continuing tensions over such emotionally charged issues as drug smuggling and migration, little scholarly attention has been devoted until now to the institutional framework of U.S.-Mexican relations. It is unreasonable to assume that these problems can be resolved by any simple procedural or organizational innovation, yet the effective management of bilateral affairs requires institutionalized arrangements capable of moderating existing conflicts and perhaps preventing new ones from arising.

The Bilateral Commission and contributors to the Roett volume offer recommendations for procedural and organizational changes designed to improve the conduct of U.S.-Mexican relations. First, both studies emphasize the importance of a consciously bilateral approach to common problems. Roett argues that future improvement in U.S.-Mexican relations must begin with "a change in mentality in the United States" and a recognition that Mexico is a "partner in seeking to resolve contentious issues such as drug smuggling, illegal immigration, and other high priority policy questions" (p. 18). This theme is echoed in the format of the Roett volume—paired chapters on different topics by U.S. and Mexican analysts—and also in the work of individual contributors. For example, Bustamante's examination of undocumented Mexican immigration to the United States shows that unilateral policy initiatives such as the Immigra-

20. Howard J. Wiarda suggests such a linkage in "Mexico: The Unravelling of a Corporatist Regime?" *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 30 (Winter 1988–89):23.

21. See, for example, "Mexican Politicians Look North of Border," *New York Times*, 8 Dec. 1989, p. 1.

22. See Robert A. Pastor and Jorge C. Castañeda, *Limits to Friendship: The United States and Mexico* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), pp. 72–77.

tion Reform and Control Act of 1986 (and the U.S. Commission for the Study of International Migration and Cooperative Economic Development, which IRCA created) are inherently inadequate responses to a problem rooted in differing levels of economic development and the U.S. economy's structural dependence on Mexican labor. Aguayo, del Villar, and Treverton make similar points in their critiques of U.S. "supply-based" approaches to the problem of drug smuggling.

The Bilateral Commission's recommendations in this area are even more explicit. The report criticizes the Reagan administration's efforts to punish Mexico for its activist policy on the Central American crisis and advocates a "new diplomacy" based on the principles of mutual respect and diplomatic equality. The commission affirms that this approach would permit Mexico and the United States to act together to promote multilateral approaches to regional security, human rights issues, and social and economic development problems. The commission's balanced attention to necessary procedural changes in both Mexico and the United States is especially noteworthy.

The commission devotes an entire chapter of its report, entitled "Education for New Understanding," to the sources of bilateral misunderstanding, including low levels of public information in each country about the bilateral partner's historical formation and worldview. Such misunderstanding is fueled by the negative images and cultural stereotypes propagated by the mass media. To promote better communication and mutual comprehension, the commission proposes an ambitious reform program for primary and secondary schools in both countries (greater attention in textbooks and more nuanced portrayals of the neighboring country's history, society, and domestic politics) and news and entertainment media (greater and more diverse coverage of events in the neighboring country backed by a concerted effort to eliminate cultural stereotypes). The commission also recommends a substantial increase in educational and cultural exchanges and emphasizes the importance of developing relevant scholarly expertise in each country about the bilateral partner. Commission members are particularly troubled by the limited resources that Mexican universities devote to U.S. or North American studies, and they urge a rapid infusion of human and material resources into this area.

Second, the Bilateral Commission proposes a number of organizational innovations based on the assumption that "Good process is no substitute for good policy, of course, but there can be no good policy without good process" (p. 163). For Mexico, the commission recommends creation of a specialized presidential cabinet for foreign affairs and a more active, multifaceted role for the Mexican embassy and key consulates in the United States. For the United States, it recommends appointment of a high-level coordinator of U.S. policy on Mexico (based in the Department

of State but having access to the president) and an outside advisory group to consult with top U.S. officials on Mexico. The commission also advocates enhanced presidential summity for the two countries, with prior preparation of substantive agendas and regular meetings between foreign ministers.

The commission further recommends the formation of several new bilateral institutions: a cabinet-level binational economic commission with a permanent secretariat; a mechanism for regular consultation and collaboration on drug-control issues; special binational authorities to coordinate border affairs (addressing such issues as the environment and salinity problems, customs procedures, and transborder infrastructure projects such as bridges, ports, and railroad junctions); and a nongovernmental binational "U.S.-Mexican Council for Advanced Research" to facilitate scholarly collaboration and educational exchanges. The commission also advocates strengthening several existing bilateral institutions, including the Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Commission and the Mixed Commission on Science and Technology (founded in 1972 but largely inactive). Finally, it recommends reinvigorating and expanding the Bilateral Agreement on Cultural Exchange and Scientific Cooperation, which was signed in 1987.

These recommendations for procedural and organizational changes in bilateral diplomacy are reasonable in the main, and the prospect of a free-trade agreement between Mexico and the United States, whatever its final scope, will inevitably increase the perceived need for reforms in the institutional framework of bilateral relations. The case these studies make for institutional reform would have been strengthened, however, had they devoted more attention to past developments in this area.

For example, although the Roett collection analyzes in detail major substantive issues in U.S.-Mexican relations, few contributors examine the success or failure of institutional arrangements designed to manage bilateral conflict. Bendesky and Godínez characterize bilateral negotiations on Mexico's foreign-debt problem as "conflictual cooperation" (p. 59), while Trebat portrays Mexico's approach to the debt crisis as "muddling through" or "wearing down the debt" (p. 75). Yet these authors draw no general conclusions concerning the debt renegotiation process and its possible lessons for managing the bilateral relationship as a whole.²³ This omission is unfortunate, given the prominence of foreign debt as a bilateral issue over the last decade and the considerable skill that Mexican and U.S. negotiators have displayed in containing this volatile but strategic economic problem. Bennett's discussion of U.S.-Mexican

23. Bendesky and Godínez's contention that conflictual cooperation offers no useful model of voluntary cooperation is unconvincing. See their contribution to *Mexico and the United States*, 62.

trade negotiations in the 1980s is far more valuable in covering the problems confronting the Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade (created in 1981 but inactive since 1983) and the progress made under the 1987 bilateral framework agreement, which provided a forum for clarifying misunderstandings, negotiating reductions in trade barriers, and resolving commercial disputes. Bennett demonstrates that considerable progress has been made in trade liberalization in recent years through a product-by-product negotiating approach that blends bilateralism and multilateralism. He suggests that sectoral free-trade agreements may be the most appropriate formula for expanding bilateral trade while minimizing political resistance.

Nor does the Bilateral Commission devote sufficient attention to the past record of organizational reforms in the conduct of bilateral relations, even though careful background analysis of different substantive issues is one of its report's principal strengths. The commission report does trace the evolution of cultural cooperation agreements (noting that the United States–Mexican Commission on Cultural Cooperation has met only six times since it was formed in 1949) and praises the generally successful work of the International Boundary and Water Commission and predecessor bilateral commissions on border problems. Nevertheless, the commission does not assess the accomplishments or failures of more prominent intergovernmental institutions such as the Mexico–United States Binational Commission (chaired by the U.S. Secretary of State and the Mexican Minister of Foreign Relations)²⁴ and the Interparliamentary Commission.

The Bilateral Commission's call for a high-level coordinator of U.S. policy on Mexico would have benefited especially from an examination of the historical record. Advocating greater policy coordination is intrinsically appealing because of the increasing complexity of U.S.–Mexican relations and the growing diversity of domestic interest groups involved. Moreover, the high level of tension in bilateral relations in 1985–86 was probably exacerbated by the fragmented U.S. process of foreign policy-making. Yet the policy record of the Carter administration's Office of the U.S. Coordinator for Mexican Affairs (created in 1979 and headed by former U.S. Representative Robert Krueger) was decidedly mixed. After examining in detail the origins and performance of the U.S. coordinator, Cathryn Thorup concludes that the office encountered substantial opposition from other governmental agencies and suffered as many policy defeats as successes. She notes that the coordinator's being located in the

24. A bilateral consultative mechanism was created by President Jimmy Carter in 1977 with economic, social, and political working groups. President Reagan renamed this body the Mexico–United States Binational Commission. It meets every twelve to eighteen months and has a broad mandate for dealing with bilateral issues.

Department of State reduced Krueger's political leverage in the policy-making process.²⁵ Although the Carter administration's mixed experience with centrally coordinated U.S. policy toward Mexico does not constitute sufficient grounds for rejecting this approach in the 1990s, this example does suggest that the Bilateral Commission's recommendations in this area might be more persuasive if past problems and the probable obstacles to proposed reforms had been evaluated in greater depth.

Finally, the possible efficacy of these proposals for procedural and organizational reforms must be evaluated in light of the underlying asymmetry of U.S.-Mexican relations. If the Mexican government is unable to exercise significant bargaining power in bilateral negotiations on major issues, then hope for adopting a consciously bilateral approach to such problems must rest on the always questionable capacity of the U.S. government to act coherently in accordance with enlightened self-interest. Continuing U.S. fears of instability "south of the border" and the resulting disruptions in bilateral relations may permit Mexico to block particularly damaging U.S. initiatives, but Mexico lacks the bargaining power to compel the United States to adopt mutually beneficial policies. Under such circumstances, a more centralized U.S. approach to policy-making on Mexico might even reduce the Mexican government's potential leverage in bilateral affairs.

25. Cathryn L. Thorup, "U.S. Policy-Making toward Mexico: Prospects for Administrative Reform," in Green and Smith, *Foreign Policy in U.S.-Mexican Relations*, 140, 147, 153-55.

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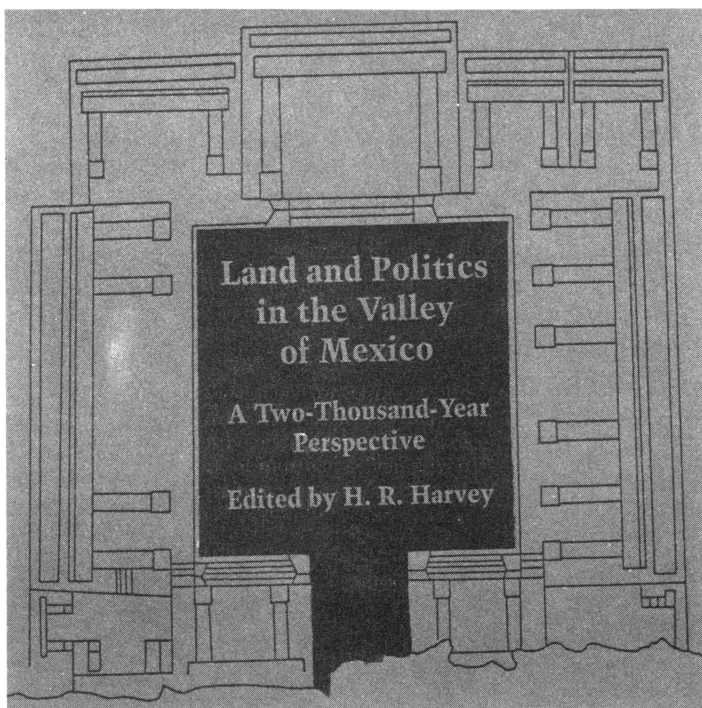
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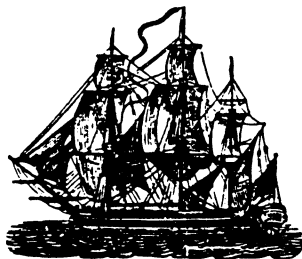


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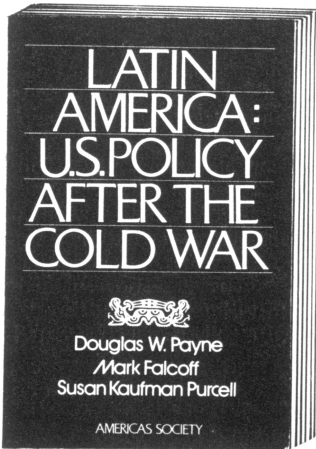
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