

Social Movements and Parties Against Single-Party Rule: The Case of Mexico

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Introduction¹

Elections and political parties have played an important part in Mexican politics during the twentieth century. Their importance notwithstanding, elections and parties are not the embodiment of politics in Mexico. The relationships of organized groups in civil society to political parties and the electoral system are also critical to an understanding of contemporary politics in Mexico. In addition, political change results not just from elections and parties but also from the interactions of groups in civil society with parties and elections as well as through non-electoral forms of political action.

This paper examines the possible strategic relations that peasant organizations can establish with opposition political parties and the implications of these relations to improve the amount of political influence while preserving the organizational autonomy of the rural poor. This paper will also briefly address the relations that political parties in the state of Guanajuato are attempting to establish with peasant organizations in preparation for mid-term elections in July 1997. By focusing on relations between political parties and peasant organization I am not arguing that these links are the only avenue peasant organizations can follow to gain political influence or through which political change can be achieved. Party-organization links, however, should be considered as one of several ways (imperfect and uncertain all) that groups in civil society can use to gain influence in the national political process and perhaps further efforts at democratization.

Elections in the late 1990s are freer and fairer in Mexico than ever before and political parties are increasingly relevant to national politics. The rural poor have been organizing outside of the traditional corporatist structures and have, by-and-large, adhered to a non-partisan stance vis-à-vis electoral politics. With the changing nature and role of elections it is appropriate to examine alternative strategies the rural poor can use to link to political parties in order to achieve greater influence in the political process that so greatly affects their lives.

This paper will proceed with a discussion of the changing nature of elections in Mexico and of the peasant's predominant strategy of non-partisanship. The balance of the paper will present four possible strategic relationships between peasant organizations and political parties and then examine the nature of nascent links between political parties and peasant organizations in Guanajuato.

The Changing Role of Elections

The years of easy PRI victories at the polls ended in the 1960s as increasingly greater numbers of voters either cast ballots for one of the opposition parties or stayed away from the polls entirely. Several factors coalesced in the late 1970s, prompting the government to initiate a series of electoral reforms, a process of reform that continues to the present. These reforms, it was hoped, would help restore the government's legitimacy. Legitimacy had eroded due to rising levels of abstentionism -- approaching half of eligible voters -- lingering popular dissatisfaction with the government's violent assault on protesting students in 1968 and conflicts between the state and the private sector. Rural and urban guerrilla movements in the 1970s further convinced the political elite that some change was necessary to avoid a complete unraveling of the regime. Electoral reform was chosen as a tool to deal with these problems. The cumulative effect of the reforms has been to make elections increasingly meaningful as both sources of legitimacy for the regime and, at least partially, vehicles for choosing public office holders.

Elections are important even in regimes that fail to reach the democratic threshold.² Elections in non-democratic regimes can serve to arouse the interest and heighten the political consciousness

of the citizens, even in cases where only one candidate appears on a ballot for each office. Elections in non-democratic countries can also be used as a method of distributing resources. While incumbents may not have won office through fair elections, they often feel an obligation to reward supporters and buy off opposition forces through the strategic distribution of state resources.

Elections can also be used to defuse and channel opposition. If opposition forces are involved in electoral competition they have fewer resources and justification to oppose the regime in more direct, and from the regime's point of view, more dangerous ways. In addition, if opposition groups are involved in electoral politics, the regime can respond to pro-democracy critics, within or without the country, with claims of democratic legitimacy. Elections -- not quite the *sine qua non* of democratic politics -- are necessary, in some form, for a political regime to credibly claim the democratic title. Elections provide at least a facade or presumption of democratic legitimacy and require the critic to delve deeper to substantiate criticism of the regime.

Beside creating a facade of democratic legitimacy, elections in non-democratic regimes can also serve to provide some legitimacy for the regime's rules of the game. To the extent that opposition groups and parties participate in elections, under the rules established by the incumbents in power, those rules acquire a measure of legitimacy by dint of the opposition's acceptance of those rules as the framework within which opposition will be carried out. The opposition grants a measure of legitimacy to the authoritarian legal framework by agreeing to work within it to achieve their political goals, in spite of the fact that those goals may be the demise of the existing regime.³ The authoritarian ruler's dream is to oversee elections which provide legitimacy to the regime and maintain a relatively limited scope for oppositional political activity while never really running the "democratic risk" of open ended electoral processes in which the results are not known until the votes are counted.

Mexican elections have played all of these roles. While usually less than democratic, Mexican elections have served to distribute resources, channel opposition energy and provide a modicum of legitimacy to authoritarian government. Since the start of the electoral reform process in 1977, elections in Mexico have begun to also play a limited role in choosing government officials. The relative importance of each of these roles has changed as the political situation in Mexico has changed (Peschard 1993).

The most recent reforms to the electoral system are concentrated on limiting the opportunities for fraud (Klesner 1995). Over several years the legal and political framework has been laid for a non-partisan and non-government controlled public body to oversee elections. In addition to this large-scale institutional change, many smaller changes have been implemented in order to make electoral fraud harder to commit and more costly to those found responsible for it. Ballot boxes are clear plexiglass, national and international election observers are officially recognized, and each voting citizen must present a photo and finger print bearing voting credential and be finger printed with indelible ink at the polling place to prevent multiple voting or voting by ineligible (sometimes deceased) individuals.

The reforms after 1988 also seem to have made some inroads into the problem of abstention. Table 1 presents data on abstention rates since the 1940s. As abstention rates climbed concern by PRI and government officials grew and reforms ensued. The 1991 mid-term election for the Chamber of Deputies saw participation rates rising from 50 percent in 1988 to 66 percent. The presidential election of 1994 stimulated the highest turnout in recent decades -- near 80 percent.

Perhaps the most telling sign that elections are increasingly important as methods by which government office holders are chosen is the number of PRI candidates losing elections. Pre-reform elections, while serving important political functions were often a public ritual which followed the private (intra-party) designation of candidate and winner (e.g. office holder).

Table 1 Abstention and Null Votes, 1946 to 1991

Year	Registered Voters	Abstention (%)	Null Votes (%)*
1946	2,654,685	13.6	--
1949	2,560,503	27.7	--
1952	4,901,741	25.5	0.01
1955	8,941,056	31.2	0.17
1958	10,443,465	28.4	0.14
1961	10,004,296	31.7	0.64
1964	13,589,594	33.4	0.14
1967	15,821,115	37.4	0.17
1970	21,653,817	35.7	4.13
1973	24,863,263	39.6	10.20
1976	25,912,986	38.0	6.00
1979	27,937,237	50.7	5.90
1982	31,526,386	33.2	0.04
1985	35,196,525	49.4	4.70
1988	38,074,926	52.6	1.80
1991	36,695,320	36.1	5.70

Source: Peschard 1993, 102.

* Null votes are those cast in favor of a non-registered candidate as well as those annulled by electoral authorities.

Since 1979 (the first elections after reform) opposition representation in the Chamber of Deputies relative to PRI representation has grown considerably, reaching 48 percent in 1988 (see Table 2).

These changes are important because they are not just the long awaited achievement of the PRI reformer's goal of reinvigorating a hegemonic party system in which elections bestow legitimacy on the regime while not challenging the hold on power of the incumbent political elite. What is happening is that elections are beginning to provide more legitimacy to the regime in the context of increasing uncertainty about the results. Elections are becoming more important as methods for choosing public office holders.

The discussion of the role of Mexican elections in choosing governmental office holders must begin with a caveat. Many elections in Mexico have become genuinely competitive and opposition parties, of both left and right, have achieved unprecedented victories since 1988 (e.g. four governorships, two terms in governorship of Baja California, mayoralities in thirteen of the twenty largest cities, several senate seats). An increased incidence of competitive elections (or elections that actually choose government officials by vote counting instead of negotiations which may only partially

take into account vote totals for the various candidates) however is not identical with a competitive electoral system and free and fair elections. All elections are by no means competitive, free, or fair. Government willingness to accede to the will of the electorate remains largely a function of the will of the president, the will of local party officials (PRI and opposition), the political importance of the office in question, and the balance of power between the forces in contention. Election results in which opposition parties have polled the majority of votes have been allowed to stand predominantly in elections in which the PAN gained a majority. The PRD, aside from its victory in a senate race in the state of Michoacán (where Lázaro and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas both served as governor) and in the Federal district in 1988, has suffered considerable violent repression and largely been denied victories except at the municipal level. Presidential discretion continues to determine which elections will serve a choosing role (Loeza 1994). While elections which perform this function are increasing in importance, the role of choosing is still limited and at times arbitrary.

Table 2 Opposition Representation in the Chamber of Deputies Relative to PRI Representation (1979-1991)

Year	PRI		Opposition	
	Number	Percent*	Number	Percent*
1979	296	74	104	26
1982	299	75	101	25
1985	289	72	111	28
1988	260	52	239	48
1991	319	64	183	36
Total	1463	66	738	34

Source: Peschard 1993, 103.

* Percentage of total seats in the Chamber of Deputies

This caveat aside, I argue that elections have changed, especially since the series of electoral reforms begun in 1977, in their role as designator of public office holders. The PAN claims to govern almost one third of all Mexicans through its control of governorships and large municipalities (Downie 1996). Increasingly, nomination for office by the PRI is no longer guarantee of election. Opposition Deputies and Senators are increasingly numerous and elected in single member districts as well as proportional representative districts.

[T]he unusual number of defeats of PRI candidates in single-member districts damaged the PRI electoral machine because for the first time the official party discovered that in elections sometimes you win and sometimes you lose: the number of PRI candidates for the Federal Chamber of Deputies who were defeated in the 1988 elections almost equaled the number that had lost in *the entire period* from 1946 to 1985. In effect, 66 PRI candidates for the Chamber of Deputies from single

member districts were defeated in the 1988 elections, this represents 22 percent of those who ran (Molinar and Weldon 1990, 235, emphasis in original).

In prior elections the PRI was able to allow the opposition to win many seats in the Chamber without ever defeating a PRI candidate due to the party deputies and proportional representative seats. Up to 1988, only 1.4 percent of PRI candidates for the Chamber had ever lost while in the 1988 election one in four PRI candidates was defeated (Molinar and Weldon 1990).

The expansion of a choosing role for elections is further confirmed by the efforts of the ruling elite to limit that expansion through legal provisions in the reforms. These limiting efforts are part of the internal contradiction of PRI initiated electoral reforms meant to liberalize the electoral arena, not to create democracy but to maintain power (Cornelius 1987).

The choosing role of elections have been limited in four ways. First, the governability clause designed to convert the party winning a plurality of the popular vote into the party with an absolute majority of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies (Patiño Camarena 1994, 238-244; Baer 1990). The clause responded to PRI fears of loss of control of the electoral college which validated presidential elections. This provision was abolished in reforms in 1993.

The second tactic used by the ruling group to limit the increased competitiveness of elections is the drawing of the proportional representation (PR) electoral districts. By law, five PR regions have been designated with 40 deputies being elected from each.⁴ In designing these PR regions, the General Council of the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) which was dominated by PRI loyalists, clearly made an effort to divide regions of opposition strength between two or more proportional representation regions. While such gerrymandering is natural and common in more democratic representational governments (although more equally matched political parties tends to limit its abuse), in this context it adds weight to the conclusion that elections were becoming more important as designator of office holders. Thus the PRI's concern with limiting the ability of opposition parties to gain an unduly high number of PR seats.

A third provision of the electoral reforms that serves to limit the expansion of competitiveness of elections is the limitations on parties sharing candidates or forming electoral alliances, instituted after 1988. These provisions make it virtually impossible to repeat what the FDN did in 1988 which threatened the PRI hold on power (Becerra Chávez 1994).

The fourth method of limiting the competitiveness of elections are not within the legal framework within which elections are carried out: fraud. Reforms to election legislation have made significant progress in limiting some forms of fraud since 1988. For example an election tribunal was created to prosecute electoral crimes and stiffer penalties were decreed for those convicted. National and international poll watchers are now allowed to participate in elections, modifications have been made in the way the citizen councilors in the electoral commission are chosen, reducing the influence of the PRI through the executive branch (Alcocer 1995). Nevertheless, many "inertias" of past practices remain and must be dealt with in order to further expand the role of choosing of Mexican elections (Becerra Chávez 1994). Significantly, the PRI majority rejected provisions in the most recent reform initiative (1996) to limit campaign spending. Clearly, spending caps would further equalize the electoral playing field and make the choosing role of elections greater, a change the PRI is not willing to accept easily.

To sum up, elections remain an important way to mobilize citizens, distribute resources, channel oppositional forces, and they are more central to the legitimacy of the regime and are

increasingly more competitive and important as mechanisms to choose government officials. In spite of considerable barriers to full fledged democratic elections throughout Mexico, elections are becoming more important as forums and mechanisms by which organized citizens can influence government policy and the identity of government personnel.

Peasant Organizational Electoral Strategy

The limited opening by the Salinas government to independent organizations of the rural poor under the rubric of the *Congreso Agrario Permanente* (CAP) and *concertación social* created a dilemma for organizations of the rural poor. To seize the opportunity to negotiate with the state in those areas open to influence required the abandonment of efforts to unify the peasant organizations independent of the state and risk cooptation and neutralization. To reject the opportunity to deal more directly with the state meant foregoing limited but significant opportunities for influence, and perhaps of greater importance, opportunities for resources which were available to those willing to negotiate directly. The organized rural poor had to choose between engaging the state as individual organizations at the expense of peasant unity and independence, or rebuffing the state's overtures and losing access to vital material resources but preserving independence.

The organizations independent of the PRI resolved this dilemma in different ways. There emerged two strategies, what I will call radical autonomy and pragmatic autonomy. The choice of strategy depended to a significant extent on an organization's goals and the ability of its members to compete, or potentially compete, in the international agricultural markets into which economically liberalizing Mexico was rapidly becoming integrated. The organizations choosing radical autonomy continued to place a high priority on agrarian issues (e.g. access to land) and citizenship issues like human rights and indigenous rights. On the other hand, those choosing pragmatic autonomy concentrated organizational resources on issues related to agricultural production; their rallying cry being, "peasant appropriation of the productive process."

Neither of these categories of organizations completely repudiated the principal demands of the other: pragmatists were also concerned with land tenure issues and repression in the countryside while radicals were increasingly involved in economically productive projects. However, a clear difference developed in the strategy each group employed to address their interests vis-à-vis the state.

The groups characterized as radically autonomous (see Table 3) grew out of the long standing conflicts over land that have characterized rural Mexico since the mid-1900s. Land tenure battles in Mexico have two facets. The first is the well known struggle against the *haciendas*: to return the land to the tiller. After Cárdenas's land reform this struggle was concluded in many regions of the country, the southern state of Chiapas being an important exception. With natural population growth in rural areas and the finite area of tillable land the problem of landlessness grew. Management of this demand for land by the state has been an activity of considerable importance over time.

Table 3 Comparison of Radical and Pragmatic Autonomy Strategies

Radical Autonomy	Common Features	Pragmatic Autonomy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agrarian demands remain central • Maintain non-commodity view of land • Mobilization preferred over negotiation with the state • Demands for cultural and citizenship rights are prominent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-partisan as an organization • Internal political pluralism • Stress internal democratic decision making • Negotiate with the state as a tactic to pursue their interests • Promotion of self-help economic development projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agrarian demands marginal • Land viewed largely as a factor of production • Negotiation with the state preferred over mobilization • Demands for cultural and citizenship rights are minor

The second facet of struggle for land concerns those groups who were either beneficiaries of a land grant in the form of an ejido or indigenous communities that held land communally, some holdings dating back to pre-Columbian occupation. These groups have experienced almost constant threats to their holdings especially in areas of high productivity with irrigation infrastructure or in areas of increasing land value due to urban expansion or potential as tourist resort locations. Thus organizations involved in this aspect of the agrarian struggle are fighting to retain their lands and way of life in the face of encroaching commercial agriculture and modernizing urban culture.

The role of land and the struggle for land is the primary distinguishing characteristic between the radical autonomous organizations and the pragmatic autonomous organizations. The pragmatic organizations see the land primarily, if not exclusively, as a factor of production to be employed to its greatest economic benefit. Groups adopting a radical autonomous stance continue to participate in the struggle for land, either to obtain or retain it. They refuse to accept the government's characterization of the revolutionary project of equitable land distribution as concluded. The more pragmatic groups, in contrast, have generally acceded to the government position and spend few if any organizational resources pursuing significant changes in the land tenure regime.

Unlike the radical autonomous organizations which were born in the struggle for land, the pragmatic autonomous groups generally organized around a production issue, land tenure did not figure in the struggle. For example, a peasant organization in Michoacan, the *Convergencia Campesina*, was organized after several ejido communities began meeting to discuss the issue of control over a newly privatized resin plant. These meetings grew into the formation of the organization for the express purpose of working together on a range of production related issues.⁵

Likewise, the UNORCA resulted from a series of peasant conferences occurring over the course of several years. The primary focus of these conferences was the solution of production related problems experienced by peasant organizations that already possessed land and enjoyed relatively secure tenure (see Costa 1989). Differences in characterizations and strategy vis-à-vis land has proved to be a principle barrier to greater unification of the pragmatic and radical peasant organizations.

Another dilemma faced by the organizations of the rural poor was whether they should ally with political parties, risking their autonomy and perhaps ending up in a new corporatism of the opposition, or remain aloof and work outside the electoral system. Interestingly, both the radical and pragmatic groups resolved this second dilemma the same way. Both remained independent of political parties and largely ignored them as tools or avenues to be used in achieving organizational goals.⁶ The way the various independent organizations of the rural poor resolved the dilemma between unifying against the state or cooperating with the state and the dilemma of participating or not in electoral politics seem to have helped limit the extent of change in state-peasant relations. To a considerable extent the rural poor remain politically integrated as petitioning clients not citizens.

Electoral reform and its augmentation of the choosing role of elections went on largely independent of the organizational efforts of the rural poor. The peasant response to electoral reform has been to focus virtually all organizational resources on constructing organizations that are explicitly non-partisan and which remain outside of the electoral contests. As individual voters, the rural poor, while still supplying key votes to the PRI, are increasingly choosing opposition candidates in elections. On the level of organizations, however, the rural poor are pursuing their interests largely outside the electoral gambit (Massieu Trigo 1994).

Non-Partisanship

This non-partisan organizational stance was pioneered with the establishment of the CNPA in 1970. The CNPA was the first national peasant organization to reject the traditional centralized organizational structures, creating instead a network of regional organizations. This network would remain independent of the state and political parties and conduct its internal affairs in a collegial and participatory manner through a rotating leadership chosen from among the representatives of the member organizations. This *coordinadora* model of organization has been replicated by many other peasant organizations since 1979 (e.g. UNORCA, CNOC).

Previous organizational efforts independent of the PRI among the rural poor had adopted a more centralized and hierarchical organizational structure and in many cases had explicitly allied, as an organization, with an opposition political party. For example the *Central Independiente de Obreros Agrícolas y Campesinos* (CIOAC) was the peasant arm of the communist party. For many years the UNTA was allied with the *Partido Socialista Trabajador* (PST).⁷

Peasant organizations have also assured internal pluralism by encouraging the adhesion of groups of any political stripe. This internal non-partisanship is also evident among some official organizations. For example the Ejido Union, Emiliano Zapata (UEEZ), while officially an affiliate of the CNC, explicitly invites all peasants to participate in its programs. The UEEZ provides credit and marketing services to any group of peasants meeting the appropriate economic requirements, regardless of their party affiliation. A CNC affiliated coffee growers organization in Veracruz exhibited a similar record of cooperation with non-CNC coffee grower organizations, partisan issues being eclipsed entirely by economic and production issues.

Autonomous organizations of the rural poor have in general chosen a strategy of non-partisanship vis-à-vis the electoral arena. They also have in common efforts to develop and promote economic development projects in rural areas that are managed by the rural poor themselves and aimed at retaining the surplus for the good of the peasants instead of private middlemen, state officials or state bureaucracies.

These important similarities notwithstanding, the organized peasantry, independent of the state, has failed to achieve organizational or programmatic unity. Radical autonomous organizations continue the pursuit of land distribution or restitution, have a propensity to favor mobilization and protest tactics rather than direct negotiation with the state, and expend greater energy on demands for indigenous cultural preservation and the extension and protection of citizenship rights for the rural poor. The pragmatic organizations concentrate their activities in economically productive projects, favor negotiation over mobilization and pursue citizenship issues largely within their organizations but not as a primary focus of demand making to state officials or agencies.

These strategic choices have developed simultaneously with the increasing freedom of elections and their importance as methods for choosing government officials. As electoral reform continues -- albeit haltingly -- and important and possibly epoch making elections approach, it seems appropriate to revisit the issue of peasant organizational participation in the electoral arena. Specifically, it would be helpful to examine some possible modalities of a shift by peasant organizations toward greater partisanship and more direct links to political parties.

Possible Models of Peasant-Political Party Relations

I propose four possible types of relationships that peasant organizations can establish with political parties. These four types are: corporatist, barter, pressure, and the repudiation of existing parties but not electoral politics by forming a peasant party or electoral organization. These four types are not intended to represent the entire universe of possible relationships but I believe they represent the principal possibilities and merit examination even if only preliminarily as more research is carried out.

The literature on social movements is increasingly concerned with how social movements are linking to the realm of traditional or institutional politics (see e.g. Jenkins and Klandermans 1995; Escobar and Alvarez 1992). Munck (1995) recently argued that the success of a social movement depends on its ability to move from a self-limiting defensive strategy to an offensive strategy that both engages the institutional arena of politics while also maintaining a correspondence between identity and strategy. If an offensive strategy is not achieved the social movement will either shrink into a communal or fundamentalist force focused on its own identity with little influence on politics (identity over strategy) or emphasize strategy over identity and lose organizational autonomy by becoming swallowed up in a larger populist political force (Munck 1995, 33).

Thus, developing an offensive strategy for political change necessarily implies some relationship with political parties which offer a filter between the social movement and the state. This relationship will be tense due to the different goals and forms of action of the party and the social movement. Munck (1995) affirms that tension in the movement-party relationship implies maintenance of autonomy by the social movement.

Hellman (1992) warns against placing too much emphasis on social movement autonomy in evaluating movement success. She argues that the interaction between party and social movement should be viewed as a dialectical relationship with each altering the other (Hellman 1992, 58). Relationships to political parties do not necessarily imply a loss of social movement autonomy.

In the present case, it seems clear that the increasingly free and fair nature of elections in Mexico and the growing willingness of large sectors of the citizenry to vote for opposition candidates present strong incentives for opposition political parties to recruit greater support among previously under-represented groups and those groups whose electoral support has been monopolized by the

PRI. Likewise, organized groups in civil society whose vision of Mexico is not encompassed within the PRI's agenda have strong incentives to support opposition political parties as well as to attempt to influence opposition political parties to more fully represent their interests. The organized rural poor outside of the PRI and opposition political parties both have incentives to establish relationships of mutual benefit (although not necessarily without tension). The four possible types of relationships will now be examined.

Corporatist Relationships

The first option to be considered are corporatist relationships between peasant organizations and political parties. These could either reproduce the PRI-CNC model or follow a model more akin to European corporatism. The PRI-CNC model is well known. It implies the subordination of the peasant organization to the party and its agenda, virtual elimination of organizational autonomy vis-à-vis the party, and reduction of the peasant organization to the roles of conduit of communication from the PRI-state to the rural poor, agent of resource distribution, and periodic mobilization of voters for the party. This model carries some advantages for the peasant organization. Primarily, it offers institutionalized access to policy makers (even if often limited in practice), guaranteed representation within the party, material resources, and protection by the state of organizational territory against other organizations seeking to gain influence among the rural poor.⁸ This model has insured that peasant representatives hold seats in congress and within PRI governing bodies. The PRI-CNC model also has several problems. The peasant organization suffers a drastic loss of autonomy. Organizational agendas and actions follow the dictates of an external force, often to serve the interests of that external entity rather than the interests of the organization's members. Because of the historical experience of the rural poor in Mexico this is obviously not an attractive option. Much of the non-partisan emphasis of peasant organizations has resulted from opposition party's efforts to recreate this corporatist model.

The alternative corporatist model draws on Western European experiences with corporatist interest representation. Here Schmitter's (1974) distinction between state and societal corporatism is illuminating. In societal corporatism the state actually depends on autonomous corporations which penetrate the state and participate in policy making. Rather than the relationship of subordination characteristic of the PRI-CNC model, in the Western European model the party and peasant organization would establish relations of partnership or coalition. In this model the peasant organization would have influence on party platforms but would also work to mobilize the electoral support of its members for the party. Here the prospects of the party and the organization of the rural poor are intimately related: an electoral loss for the party is also a loss for the peasant organization.

Advantages of the Western European model of corporatism are principally the preservation of organizational autonomy and institutionalization of access to party decision makers and in turn state decision makers if electoral victory follows. Disadvantages of this model are primarily related to the considerable barriers to the establishment of such a relationship. The peasant movement would have to share characteristics of organized labor in European countries: relatively large, unified, and organized in such a way that organization leaders could credibly claim to be able to offer their member's support to the political party. These characteristics do not currently exist among the organizations of the rural poor. As outlined above, the peasant movement is characterized by multiple organizations with competing agendas and world views. Past efforts at forging peasant unity have failed in the face of state cooptation and manipulation and intransigence of many peasant

organizations. An additional disadvantage of this model of organization-party relations, assuming the barriers to formation are overcome, is that peasant organizational well being is tied directly to the well being of the political party. The changing electoral prospects of the party can weaken the organization of the rural poor and leave it with little if any influence on national politics if its party ally falls from power. For this reason, among others, we see a decline in corporatist systems in Western Europe as social democratic parties lose power (Lewin 1994).

Barter Relationships

The second type of relationship organizations of the rural poor can establish with opposition parties is one of exchange or barter. In this relationship the organization and the party agree on the exchange of electoral "goods and services" between the two entities. Typically parties offer to adopt some of the organization's demands as part of the party's platform and pursue the organization's interests whenever in elective posts. In exchange the organization offers votes, human resources for campaign work (e.g. canvassers, organizers, etc.), and material resources. These barter agreements often take the form of formal pacts or alliances between the organization and the party.

Unlike a corporatist relationship, the barter relationship does not imply group membership or affiliation within the party. There is no formal institutionalized mechanism for organization influence in the party leadership; there are no "peasant" seats in party governing circles. In addition, unlike the corporatist arrangement, the barter arrangement carries no implication of permanence. The barter agreements are conjunctural; they are usually formed in preparation for a specific election and not envisioned as necessarily long term relationships or exclusive relationships. Before concluding a barter agreement, the organization can "shop around" in order to find the party that provides the optimal combination of willingness to represent organizational interests *and* likelihood of electoral victory. The peasant organization could establish barter relations on a state level with different parties in each state depending on their willingness to exchange influence for peasant support. In the corporatist relationship the ties between organization and party are more permanent and not likely to be severed or re-initiated at the start of each election campaign.

The advantages to organizations of the rural poor of this type of relationship are important. Group autonomy can be preserved to a greater extent than in the corporatist arrangement since an explicit exchange is envisioned. As in any contractual relationship, mechanisms for enforcement can be applied to keep both sides of the agreement fulfilling their obligations. This contrasts with the corporatist arrangement in which the peasant organization is more likely to experience subordination since exit -- the organization's principle tool of enforcement -- is largely foreclosed due to the organization's formal membership in the party and dependence on the party for resources. Other advantages of the barter relationship include a more direct link between votes and policy outcomes since the votes are explicitly exchanged for platform planks and public policy. A final advantage of the barter arrangement is its flexibility. If the exchange does not result mutually beneficial neither the party nor the peasant organization is obligated to maintain the ties. Each is free to forge relationships with other organizations or parties respectively. No one is stuck with a loser. This flexibility allows the organization of the rural poor to "abandon a sinking ship," even before the election, and establish a barter relation with another more promising party. Such flexibility limits, to a certain extent, the debilitating effects of electoral loss on the organization.

A barter relationship, however, presents several disadvantages for organizations of the rural poor. The three types of resources exchanged in such relationships, votes, human resources, and

money, are relatively hard for peasant organizations to amass. Votes, the lowest cost resource, require a degree of organizational unity, cohesion, and coordination that has not been achieved on a national level among the rural poor. To be viable partners in barter relationships, the organized rural poor must be able to credibly promise their votes. Individual peasants should remain free as citizens to vote as they wish therefore a barter relationship implies that peasant leaders are recognized by most organization members as legitimate representatives of their interests. If barter relations are established by unrepresentative peasant leaders there will be little incentive on the part of the individual peasant to vote in support of that relationship. Clearly some organizations could provide votes in this way but probably not enough to be able to affect any but local or state level elections. The division of independent organizations between the radical and pragmatic camps bodes poorly for the ability to offer a peasant voting block in exchange for influence on a national level.

In regard to human and financial resources the problems are perhaps more acute. The organized rural poor command very few financial resources. Those most able to offer material support to party campaigns are those in the export sectors of coffee and sugar. The vast majority of sugar cane growers are still securely within the PRI-CNC system and therefore unlikely to establish barter relations with opposition parties. The coffee growers organized in CNOG control some funds due to quotas paid on each bag of exported coffee beans. Legal restrictions on the use of these funds remain a barrier to their deployment in elections. Even without legal restriction the continued low price of coffee on international markets makes it unlikely that coffee growers would be able to offer much in the way of campaign contributions in the near future. Virtually all other peasant organizations either depend on NGO support, or money from Pronasol to maintain their operations and therefore are unable to contribute to opposition electoral campaigns.

Human resources, however, may be a possible bargaining chip for the rural poor. Their isolation and geographical distribution limit the value of this resource however. There are several regions of the country, nevertheless, in which the rural poor are concentrated and numerous enough that they could be valuable in canvassing, and other campaign activities. Door to door, *rancho* to *rancho*, *ejido* to *ejido* campaign work is a relatively low cost activity for the underemployed rural poor.

Other less concrete disadvantages with barter relationships result from the realities of the political system. With opposition parties still relatively weak and unequally institutionalized (the PAN being the only party with a likelihood of contesting the PRI congressional majority in 1997) the organizations of the rural poor may avoid barter relations in order to prevent wasting what few resources they have. In addition, the high degree of centralization of political power in the executive presents a challenge for regional organizations to achieve national influence. Regional voices are drowned by the overpowering voice of the national executive. These organizations could be effective in state and municipal level elections in which their strength could be bartered.

Finally, the barter relationship presents the danger of degenerating into clientelism, reinforcing the long standing attitude of humble petitioners that has plagued the rural poor for decades. Instead of consolidating the progress made by independent organizations of the rural poor in the 1980s and 1990s in promoting a greater conception of citizenship among the rural poor, peasant barterers could revert to clients supplicating for largesse rather than demanding respect for rights as citizens. This danger of clientelism increases in inverse proportion to the degree of organizational unity of the rural poor. The more the peasantry is organizationally fractured the more likely small and weak peasant

organizations will become clients of political parties -- suffering the costs and enjoying few of the benefits of the corporatist model. Opposition parties have not been very successful in avoiding the creation of clientelism in their relationships with potential voters, or with organized groups in the areas in which they govern.⁹

Pressure Relationships

The third type of possible peasant organization-political party relationship is that of pressure. Similar in many ways to the barter relationship, the pressure relationship does not become formalized in an exchange or alliance with a particular party but remains non-partisan. The organization of the rural poor formulates a statement of its interests and positions and then presents this statement to all political parties, advocating the incorporation of rural poor interests into party platforms and plans of government. The peasant organization leaders also make it clear that their members care about these issues and will cast their votes for the party and candidate that best addresses them. This relationship is aimed at influencing public opinion and the overall agenda of the electoral campaign rather than focusing exclusively on the platform or agenda of a single party. Ideally, all or most of the parties will see it in their electoral interest to adopt all or parts of the peasant agenda.

The methods of carrying out this strategy are two fold: direct meetings with party leaders and indirect campaigning (through the media or other methods) to the voters at large, seeking support for the peasant agenda. By pursuing a public campaign, the peasants can possibly gain greater strength by attracting non-peasant voters to support their positions. To a degree this is the strategy taken by the EZLN. The *Zapatistas* continue to remain generally aloof from parties but to seize every opportunity to influence public opinion and the national debate. The expressions of public support for *Zapatista* demands in particular and peasant and indigenous interests in general since the EZLN uprising indicates that peasant organizations can possibly create a multi-class public opinion force that could influence the national agenda.

The pressure relationship has the advantage of preserving a greater degree of autonomy for the rural poor than the barter relationship with its necessity of compromise on demands in order to conclude the bargain. In the pressure relationship the rural poor can present their full agenda both to the parties and the public and let it stand on its merits. It also allows the rural poor to concentrate on a few key interests. In the barter relationship the formal agreement and necessity of offering campaign support links the rural poor to issues championed by the party that may not be of interest to them. In the pressure relationship the rural poor need publicly support only those interests deemed most important. The so-called single issue pressure groups like the pro-life movement, women's movement, and gay-lesbian movement in many countries exemplify this pressure tactic. The pressure relationship also frees the peasant organization from costly campaign work and allows it to concentrate more of its organizational resources on the non-electoral issues around which it is organized.

The pressure relationship also carries with it disadvantages for the rural poor. Principally among them is the possibility of irrelevance. Due to both the narrowness and broadness of peasant interests their attempts at pressuring for change in the national debate may be easily brushed aside.

Rural organizations want better infrastructure, higher prices, cheaper inputs -- relatively narrow interests in an urban country and at times at odds with the interests of urban consumers and tax payers. They also are demanding citizenship rights and political democracy -- broad issues that go beyond the relatively small proportion of rural poor in the country. To demand such transcendent

political reforms from a base of only a quarter of the population spread out in rural areas seems doomed to marginality.

Another barrier to a pressure relationship is the high cost of influencing public opinion. The EZLN seems to be successful in influencing the national debate precisely because they began with violence and skillfully used the national and international media and internet to communicate their ideas and demands. This presents a problem for rural organizations committed to a non-violent path to change. Without the free media coverage offered to violent opposition groups, most organizations of the rural poor will find it impossible to finance a national or even regional level media campaign to communicate their ideas to the voters. Protest activities of some sort are probably necessary in order to gain free media access.¹⁰ Tactics such as marches to Mexico City, road blockages, sit-ins, and hunger strikes, can be effective but carry with them a high cost in human terms -- especially if countered with police force. Success with the pressure strategy requires skillful use of public protest to communicate demands while conserving scarce organizational and human resources. This public strategy must be combined with equally skillful efforts at directly influencing the political parties through private lobbying. These are significant challenges for organizations of the rural poor.

Peasant Organization as Political Party

The final possible strategy available to the organized rural poor is to repudiate the existing political parties and create a new party of their own. This tactic has been used in a limited way at the municipal level. Advantages are clearly the maximization of organizational autonomy -- the organization/party only being limited by the necessity of attracting votes. If successful, the organization/party will be able to govern in a way more directly linking their interests to public policy outcomes than in any of the other relationships.

The disadvantages of the organization/party strategy are considerable. Due to the size and distribution of the rural poor there is only hope for success with this tactic in rural municipalities. Urban municipalities would present such a broad range of issues foreign to the interests or demands of the peasant organization that it would either fail to attract sufficient electoral support or end up losing its identity as a peasant organization and convert into a traditional political party with a broad agenda. This last result is not entirely a disadvantage if the conversion does not require the abandonment of core peasant interests but it does spell the demise of the peasant organization. Outside of rural municipalities it is unlikely that a peasant organization-as-party would be able to credibly present candidates for office. The financial and human resources necessary for a national level electoral campaign are beyond the reach of even the strongest of the existing peasant organizations. It is doubtful that even a newly unified peasant movement would be able to successfully carry out a national campaign as a party.

The transformation of an organization of the rural poor into a party involves changes in some aspects of the basic nature of the organization. Parties seek political power and to govern; organizations of the rural poor seek resources, production, autonomy, influence over public policy. To present itself as a political party, a peasant organization would have to adopt the desire to rule which is a qualitative change over the desire to be ruled well as full citizens. This transformation could produce fissiparous forces that would destroy the organization more easily than forge a new political party.

Some Empirical Developments in Party-Peasant Organization Relations

Some preliminary research in the state of Guanajuato offers a few hints of the direction and nature of the development of relationships between political parties and organizations of the rural poor. Through interviews with activists, leaders, and elected officials from the PRI, PAN, and PRD it appears that little momentum exists on the part of political parties to greatly transform their links to peasant organizations. While these interviews were only in one state and with a fairly narrow range of sources (peasant sources being excluded entirely) my conclusions are suggestive and preliminary until further research can be carried out.

The PRI and Peasants: The "Revolution" Continues

As may have been expected, the Party of the Institutional Revolution continues more or less in the institutionalized channels of the past in its relationships with the organized rural poor. The CNC remains its most important peasant ally and the subordination of the CNC to the party persists. This relationship, in spite of its longevity, is not without tensions. CNC and PRI elected officials are aware of the negative effects of the corporatist relationship on the CNC. Subordination to the president and government line by the CNC continues to have a debilitating effect on the CNC's ability to attract and retain peasant support and recruit leaders.¹¹ The neoliberal reform in agriculture, especially the reform of Art. 27 of the Constitution ending land reform, are credited with eliminating much of the discourse of the CNC. In the past the CNC was able to point to the PAN and its opposition to the *ejido* as the enemy. After Salinas's administration when much of the PAN agenda for rural Mexico was adopted and implemented by the PRI, the PAN is no longer the only enemy of the *ejido* and CNC leaders have trouble credibly offering the PRI as a protector and friend of the rural poor.

Nevertheless, the PRI and CNC are continuing more or less in their traditional methods for getting out the rural vote in favor of the PRI. Since material resources are in shortage traditional economic incentives for a PRI vote are being deemphasized in favor of redoubled emphasis on efficient and transparent operation of existing programs and services to the rural poor.¹² This strategy is criticized by one PRI faction that fears a debacle if more drastic change is not made within the party and in its rural strategy.¹³ It appears that the dominant position within the PRI and CNC in Guanajuato is that the CNC continues to be a "potent" force within the party through its role in policy making and has no need to modify its corporatist relations with the PRI or seek out a more diverse range of alliances or relationships with other political parties or other peasant organizations.¹⁴

The PAN: Individualism and Markets

The PAN, due to its ideological preference for individualism rather than collective solutions and its diagnosis of the principal problems in rural Mexico, remains a relatively weak force in rural politics. One PAN activist and former state and federal deputy from a rural district argued that the rural poor were afraid of organizations and therefore the party had to deal with them as individuals.¹⁵ While this approach may attract the politically active but unorganized peasants it will do little to establish ties of cooperation between the PAN and the existing regional and national level peasant organizations.

The PAN's adherence to market solutions to many of the social and economic ills of the rural poor also create significant challenges in recruiting the rural vote or establishing ties to existing peasant organizations for some form of cooperation in elections. Few if any peasant organizations deny markets play an important role in agricultural production. However, virtually all peasant

organizations are calling for significant limits on market forces and considerable state intervention. The extent of coincidence in interests of the PAN and the major peasant organizations is rather limited; the greatest area of overlap being in the protection of citizenship rights and democracy. This coincidence doesn't seem to be great enough to entice peasant organizations to greater cooperation with the PAN since issues of production and distribution of surplus are central interests of the rural poor.

In Guanajuato there is a nascent effort to create a new peasant organization ideologically close to the PAN: the *Liga de Acción Agropecuaria*. The *Liga* is being organized by a young attorney Gerardo Valdovinos, son of a prosperous dairy farmer (small holder not ejidatario). The *Liga* is founded on a three part solution to the rural problem: peasants as low cost labor on privatized agricultural lands; "direction" of competent people; and, capital which will come with stability. The concentration of land in a few hands is not, in and of itself a problem, rather the exploitation of human by human that sometimes accompanies unequal land distribution is identified as the evil to attack. The *Liga*, therefore, would provide the necessary protection and assistance to the rural poor to prevent exploitation while facilitating the concentration of land holdings in to the hands of those competent and with access to capital.¹⁶ The *Liga* is financially supported by the small holders in the state (their interest in freeing agricultural labor from the market distorting *ejidos* is only imperfectly veiled).

The *Liga's* leader envisions "selling" the organization to the party which most closely adheres to the principals underlying the organization, currently the PAN because of its liberal, capitalist, and free market ideology. However, the *Liga* is not to become a corporatist pillar like the CNC-PRI relationship. Here, the potential relationship between the *Liga* and the PAN appears to correspond with my categories of Barter and Pressure. The *Liga*, unlike other independent peasant organizations, is clearly not an outgrowth of peasant experience and independent organizing. Protestation by its founder notwithstanding, the *Liga* in many ways resembles the development of the CNC in that it is explicitly a party initiative motivated more by political and economic interest on the part of the organizing party than by authentic expressions of interest from the rural poor themselves. Clearly further research must be done to track the development and future relationship of this organizational effort with the PAN.

The PRD: Tense Relations and Corporatist Tendencies

Due to the provenance of the PRD as a party the tensions inherent in relationships with peasant organizations are consciously acknowledged by party leaders. With roots both in the PRI and the socialist and non-socialist left, the PRD, as a party, at times recreates, or attempts to recreate relationships with peasant organizations similar to the corporatist relations within the PRI. Party leaders argue that a corporatist culture has developed in Mexico conditioning both political parties and leaders of social movements to fall into clientelistic and corporatist relations.¹⁷ While much has been written in the social movement literature about the dangers to social movements of subordination to political parties little has been written about the converse. The PRD leadership in Guanajuato, however is acutely aware of the danger of the party becoming controlled by a social movement organization. It appears that in some cases the majority of the members of the PRD in a given region are also members of a peasant organization. The tendency in such instances is for the social movement organization to exert influence so that the party becomes its extension and is run as a social movement rather than a political party. Thus political platforms are distorted and limited

to demands of a purely social nature. In such cases the party must exert considerable effort to "elevate the level of organization and of political platform."¹⁸

This threat to party autonomy is clearly not the only source of tension in relations between the PRD and peasant organizations. Electoral clientelism is also a vice that PRD leaders are challenged to eradicate. Party theory and actual practice are often distinct in this area.¹⁹

The PRD in Guanajuato currently has relations with the *Unión de Campesinos Democráticos* (UCD). This relationship primarily revolves around the legalization of autos brought from the United States by Guanajuato residents who have migrated for employment. The Party works with the UCD to cut through the bureaucratic red tape and legalize these autos for the rural poor. Clearly this relationship is similar to the clientelism of the PRI and CNC in many ways.

Apart from the ties to the UCD, the PRD is attempting to construct links with other peasant organizations in the Pressure framework. The party presents its platform and ideas to organization leaders and then the peasant organization debates and decides whether to support the PRD. In addition, the PRD has instituted a policy in which up to half of PRD candidates in elections will be non-party members. In this way, the party hopes to forge closer ties to existing social organizations without falling into the twin vices of subordination of the party to the organization or the organization to the party.

In sum, the PRD is negotiating the straits between the rocks of isolation from organized civil society and the shoals of corporatism and clientelism. While corporatist relations with peasant organizations may be dictated by electoral pragmatism given the dominant political culture party officials clearly see the potential dangers to both the party and the peasant organizations themselves in such a relation. Clearly the PRD presents a platform that offers the greatest coincidence with the demands and proposals of the leading peasant organizations in Mexico (e.g. renegotiation of NAFTA, resolution of land tenure issues and preservation of the *ejido*, greater government intervention in agricultural markets and selective subsidies and import tariffs to preserve greater self sufficiency in food production, and respect of indigenous cultures, civil liberties, and human rights). It remains to be seen whether its increasing efforts to establish relations with peasant organizations will break free of the forces of culture and tradition to create a new party -organization link.

Issues to Explore Further

From this brief empirical foray it becomes clear that two important issues must be investigated further to better understand the dynamics and possible development of peasant organization-political party relations. The first issue is that of political culture and clientelism. Increasingly in Mexico it appears that any political relationship that one wants to criticize is labeled clientelistic. As in the case of the PRD, clientelism and corporatism are perceived a ubiquitous cultural forces that are at times nearly irresistible for political actors. It would seem that leaders of organizations of the rural poor are unable to address political party leaders in anything but the posture of petitioning vassal hoping for largesse. Demands, it seems, are made not as a matter of right but as requests for exceptions to current practice.

I question the extent to which corporatism and clientelism are actually ingrained aspects of political culture. Their seeming all pervasiveness may be a false illusion. PRI-CNC relations and PRI-peasant relations may not have been as overpoweringly clientelistic as popularly assumed. While a clientelism of the opposition is a clear danger it may not be as automatically formed or as common as is argued by rival parties. Clearly we need a precise, narrow and rigorous conceptualization of

clientelism, especially as it relates to electoral politics. The wave of democratic transitions that washed over Latin America has made elections of greater importance in politics in the region, even in countries like Mexico where the wave had diminished to an impotent ripple by the time it reached its shores bringing only superficial and rhetorical change. More empirical research must be done on the nature of relations between political parties and social organizations using a conceptualization of clientelism that will allow us to distinguish between authentic clientelism and the natural effect of democratic politics in which elected representatives work to provide benefits to their constituents in order to increase their chances of reelection. Every government program is not clientelistic; every program proposed by a political party to attract supporters through an explicit or implicit exchange of goods and services is not necessarily clientelistic. When a PRD congressional candidate promises during a campaign that if elected she will work to introduce legislation legalizing autos from the U.S. we are not necessarily witnessing a clientelism of the opposition. If this public promise was accompanied by private negotiations with peasant leaders in which individual benefits to the leaders were promised in exchange for their delivery of their member's votes (either legally or through fraud) then clientelism would be more apparent. In short, we must distinguish clientelism from the other possible relations between party and citizens in order to more fully understand the nature of developments in Mexico.

The second issue that must be examined is the nature of the evolution of the party system in Mexico. It appears that political parties in Mexico are still multi-purpose organizations distinct from the ideal types envisioned in Western democratic theory. In Mexico political parties are often used by citizens instead of the court system to arbitrate disputes, in place of other civic organizations to provide social interaction and entertainment, and in place of religious organizations to provide a psychic security and hope for future well being. Peasant organizations often seek out a party with which to ally with so that the party label can be used as a key (to open government doors), as a shield (to protect the organization from government repression and/or attacks from other parties or groups), and as a vehicle for political salvation (replacing organized religion). Parties in Mexico are asked to do too much and not enough simultaneously. To the extent that judicial and social welfare functions are carried out by political parties the stakes involved in electoral defeat are raised considerably making democratic elections and alteration in office inconceivable for many. Parties must limit the functions they perform.

At the same time, parties involved extensively in dispute resolution, social welfare provision, and red tape cutting will have little time and few resources to devote to their primary function that of either governing or preparing an alternative to the incumbent party in order to become the governing party. It would seem that both opposition political parties in Mexico and social movement organizations must more clearly delineate their political roles. If the distinction were more clear between these organizations it would become more easy for relations to be established that would be mutually beneficial.

Conclusion and Tentative Prescription

To briefly recapitulate the argument of the paper. Elections in Mexico, while not perfect, have gradually become freer and fairer due to the reform process begun in 1977. Increasingly, elections are serving to choose the holders of public office through the counting of votes rather than behind the scenes negotiations and accommodation. During the same period in which elections were becoming more important as mechanisms of choosing elected leaders, organizations of the rural poor

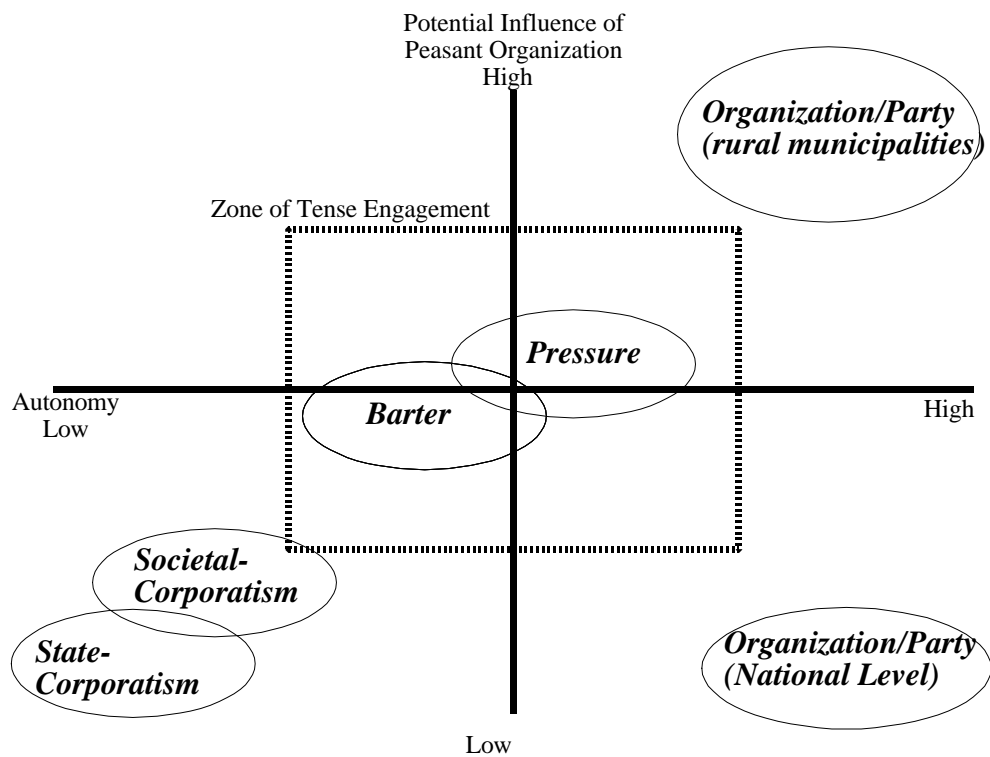
innovated in their organizational structures creating internally democratic *coordinadoras* that have been successful at resisting the forces of cooptation from the PRI and state. These new peasant organizations, however, have taken a markedly non-partisan stance and largely avoided the electoral process as an arena of struggle for their interests. With important mid-term congressional elections only months away, in which the PRI could lose the majority of the congressional seats, a possible electoral strategy of the rural poor should be examined.

I have presented the four principle electoral strategy options available to the rural poor. Each has advantages and disadvantages. In Table 4 the principle costs and benefits of each strategy are summarized. These four strategies can be compared in terms of two dimensions: their effect on the autonomy of the peasant organization and the potential political influence the peasant organizations will have on the political system. This comparison is graphically represented in Figure 1.

Table 4 Possible Relations Between Independent Organizations and Political Parties

Type of Relation	Advantages	Disadvantages
State-Corporatism [e.g. PRI-CNC: peasants subordinated]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • access to policy makers • material resources • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • loss of autonomy • party interests subordinate interests of organized peasants • must guarantee that rural vote goes to the party - - implies loss of civil liberties
Society-Corporatism [peasants are members of party]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • influence in the party (greater autonomy) • access to policy makers • material resources • protection of organizational space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requires greater peasant unity • requires greater number of peasants • must guarantee that rural vote goes to the party - - implies loss of civil liberties • well being of peasant organization linked to party well being
Barter [exchange votes, human and/or material resources for influence in party]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preserves autonomy • direct influence on party platform • easily changed/modified relation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • peasants have few resources to barter (hard to promise votes) • opposition parties are weak • presidentialism/centralism is obstacle for regional organizations • barter can degenerate into clientelism (loss of citizen status)
Pressure [peasants try to influence parties and public opinion]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preserves autonomy • permits concentration on issues most important to peasants • possibility to influence national agenda and debate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • possibility of irrelevance (interests are too specialized and too generalized) • few resources for media campaign • peaceful and/or violent protest is dangerous and taxing
Organization/Party [peasant organization becomes a political party]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maximizes autonomy • direct correspondence between interests and program of party • potential success in local level elections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • little electoral strength on national level • conflict between goals of organization (produce, participate) and those of party (govern)

Figure 1



In this paper I have also briefly examined some of the trends in relations between parties and organizations of the rural poor in the state of Guanajuato, largely from the point of view of the parties. It appears, that little new initiative is being taken by political parties to recruit the rural vote. The PRD is struggling with the issues of autonomy from the peasant organizations for the party and autonomy from the party for the peasant organizations. The PAN is attempting to attract rural voters with little more than their traditional message of clean government and markets largely free markets. The PRI continues with the corporatist relations that are its hallmark. A tentative conclusion from this preliminary and narrow empirical data is that the rural poor themselves will have to be the source of innovation in regard to electoral strategies and relations with parties. Barter and pressure relations seem most likely and most feasible given the restraints and peasant organizations.

I believe the strategies which will yield the greatest potential influence and preserve the autonomy of the peasant organizations will be a combination of the barter and pressure strategies -- what appears within the box designated "Area of Tense Engagement" in Figure 1.

It should be noted that for the barter and pressure strategies to have the greatest positive effect, the organizations of the rural poor must first resolve the problem of factionalism. A single organization representing the rural poor is probably not practical at this time. Nevertheless, increased cooperation and unity on key issues could be achieved so that the rural poor present a more united front against the forces of the market and non-democratic state. Perhaps a temporary alliance could be forged for purposes of the electoral campaign to coordinate the efforts at barter and pressure of individual peasant organizations. This conjunctural unity would also facilitate the pooling of scarce resources to finance the efforts to influence public opinion and the national debate.

Clearly the road will not be smooth or without blind alleys, pot holes and road blocks. In spite of the challenges inherent in a more partisan and electoral oriented strategy by the rural poor, I believe that significant improvement in the well being of the peasantry as well as their ability to participate in the elaboration of public policy as full citizens will not be achieved without combining an electoral and partisan strategy with the areas of struggle already engaged.

Notes

1. This article is an amplified version of a paper "Peasants and Electoral Strategies After Reform: Costs, Benefits, and Possibilities" presented at the VIII ENCUESTRO NACIONAL DE INVESTIGADORES EN ESTUDIOS ELECTORALES, Guanajuato, Gto., México, December 4-7, 1996.
2. I would argue that Mexico has yet to reach the democratic threshold. Electoral and human rights abuses continue to be political tools employed by the regime, its allies, and at times, the opposition.
3. In both Chile and Brazil during the 1980s the issue of whether to play by the rules created by military regimes was of primary concern to opposition political parties and groups. In both cases, the regime's rules were accepted in spite of the legitimacy this granted to what the opposition forces considered illegitimate regimes. In both cases the military regimes' rules contributed to the eventual demise of those regimes. However, since democratization took place within the framework of rules created in part to preserve the power and prerogatives of the military the resulting democratic governments retain many authoritarian enclaves and significant limitations on the public's ability to influence or control the state.
4. The original electoral reform law of 1977 created deputies of proportional representation, expanding the Chamber of Deputies to 400 (300 representatives of single member districts and 100 representatives from PR districts). Subsequent modifications have expanded the Chamber to 500 seats, 200 of which are PR seats (1987) and created the five present PR regions.
5. Juan Manuel Argote Oropeza, manager of Maize Program, *Convergencia Campesina*, interview with author, March 29, 1994, Pátzcuaro, Michoacan, Mexico.
6. This is not to imply that peasants as individual citizens did not join political parties or vote -- both the PRI and opposition parties received an important percentage of their votes from the rural poor. The issue here is party affiliation and electoral participation as organizations.
7. The UNTA eventually severed its ties with the PST over issues of organizational autonomy and representation within the party. (Pablo Duarte, National Delegate from Yucatan of UNTA, interview with author March 27, 1994, Mexico City.)
8. For example the state intervened on behalf of the CNC in the conflict between the CNC and CTM over the organization of rural laborers.
9. José Luis Barbosa Hernandez, PRD Deputy in the Guanajuato State Legislature, argues that the PRI's form of amassing support has penetrated Mexican culture to such an extent that it is very hard for the PRD to not fall "automatically" into a patron-client relationship with social organizations. (Interview with author, December 11, 1996, Guanajuato, Guanajuato, Mexico.)
10. Public financed media access for civic organizations is probably too much to expect from the electoral reform process that is still bogged down over the issue of public funding for political parties's media access.

11. These sentiments were shared by both a PRI official and CNC leader and Federal Deputy. Anonymous interviews with author, December 9, 1996, Guanajuato, Gto. Mexico.
12. Anonymous CNC leader and PRI elected official, interview with author, December 9, 1996, Guanajuato, Gto. Mexico.
13. Anonymous PRI official, interview with author, December 9, 1996, Guanajuato, Gto. Mexico.
14. Anonymous CNC leader and PRI elected official, interview with author, December 9, 1996, Guanajuato, Gto. Mexico.
15. Interview with author December 11, 1996, Guanajuato, Gto., Mexico.
16. Gerardo Valdovinos, Coordinator of the *Liga de Acción Agropecuaria* of the State Directive Committee of the PAN. Interview with author, December 11, 1996, Celaya, Gto. Mexico.
17. Anonymous PRD state legislator and PRD official. Interview with author, December 11, 1996, Guanajuato, Gto. Mexico.
18. Anonymous PRD state legislator and PRD official. Interview with author, December 11, 1996, Guanajuato, Gto. Mexico.
19. Anonymous PRD state legislator and PRD official. Interview with author, December 11, 1996, Guanajuato, Gto. Mexico.

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