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Regional Integration and Transnational Labor Strategies under NAFTA

Abstract

[Excerpt] This paper argues that while the internationalization of the economy has tended to weaken national labor movements, the internationalization of domestic politics may expand the traditional arenas for strategic action for labor unions. In particular, the North American Free Trade Agreement has been portrayed by some of its many critics as representing the consolidation of a neoconservative or neoliberal project that will not only shape the future economic development of the region, but also constrain its social policies and limit its political options (Grinspun and Cameron 1993: Chapter 1). However, these same critics have also noted that the debate surrounding NAFTA in Mexico, Canada, and the United States has led to a broad range of contacts and cooperative efforts among labor, environmental, women's, religious, and educators' groups in the three countries. This process is not only itself an expression of the search for new strategies in the context of regional integration, it has also altered the traditional ways in which U.S.-Mexican relations have been carried out and shaped the political process within Mexico. While the constraints to transnational labor collaboration remain strong, these new dimensions of the international and political environments nonetheless potentially offer new opportunities to weakened labor movements in all three countries.

This paper will begin with a discussion of the contours of this new international political environment—in particular, the internationalization of domestic politics—and how this environment differs from traditional, nationally bounded notions of domestic politics and state action. I then discuss how both the transnationalization of politics and regional economic integration change the arena for strategic action by labor groups, how this new environment affects the labor movement in Mexico, and the kinds of strategies Mexican and U.S. labor unions have begun to pursue in this context. Finally, I consider whether the side agreement on labor standards that was developed as a complement to the NAFTA represents an example of institutionalization of this political internationalization, thus potentially facilitating further transnational collaboration among unions, or whether, alternatively, the side accord buttresses national institutions and state autonomy in ways that could constrain labor's strategic use of the international arena.

Keywords

North American Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA, trade unions, Mexico, labor movement, globalization, economic integration

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Regional Integration And Transnational Labor Strategies Under NAFTA

Maria Lorena Cook

Introduction

The globalization of the economy and the recent trend toward the formation of regional trading blocs pose a fundamental challenge to national labor movements. The mobility of capital offshore and across national borders to take advantage of lower labor costs has threatened jobs in higher-wage countries and raised charges of labor exploitation in poorer nations. Critics contend, furthermore, that regional trade pacts such as the one recently created for the North American area grant transnational corporations greater autonomy and power at the expense of states and citizens. Labor movements, confined within national boundaries by legislation, tradition, and political institutions, are at a special disadvantage in defending their interests in this new international environment. Nonetheless, global production provides the incentive for labor unions to seek out new, collaborative strategies with labor in other countries. And regional integration, by providing possibilities for direct and regular contact between labor unions, may make such transnational strategies more feasible.

Together with the internationalization of the economy, another related yet distinct global trend is the internationalization of domestic politics. This phenomenon has been described as the "interpenetration of domestic and international spheres" and the "blurring of domestic and external issues," and involves the increased influence of international actors on states at multiple points in the political process (Chalmers 1991; Pastor 1992; Sikkink 1993). The internationalization of domestic politics has also begun to reshape understandings and definitions of national sovereignty in ways that reflect the increasing pressures and influences of international actors on states and their policies (Sikkink 1993). The issue-areas of human rights, and to a lesser extent, environmental protection, are examples where this internationalization and the reshaping of traditional concepts of sovereignty are most evident. In formally constituted regional economic blocs, such as the European Community (later the European Union) or the North American Free Trade Area, the pressures for the internationalization of domestic politics would appear to be even greater.

This paper argues that while the internationalization of the economy has tended to weaken national labor movements, the internationalization of domestic politics may expand the traditional arenas for strategic action for labor unions. In particular, the

North American Free Trade Agreement has been portrayed by some of its many critics as representing the consolidation of a neoconservative or neoliberal project that will not only shape the future economic development of the region, but also constrain its social policies and limit its political options (Grinspun and Cameron 1993: Chapter 1). However, these same critics have also noted that the debate surrounding NAFTA in Mexico, Canada, and the United States has led to a broad range of contacts and cooperative efforts among labor, environmental, women's, religious, and educators' groups in the three countries. This process is not only itself an expression of the search for new strategies in the context of regional integration, it has also altered the traditional ways in which U.S.-Mexican relations have been carried out and shaped the political process within Mexico. While the constraints to transnational labor collaboration remain strong, these new dimensions of the international and political environments nonetheless potentially offer new opportunities to weakened labor movements in all three countries.

This paper will begin with a discussion of the contours of this new international political environment—in particular, the internationalization of domestic politics—and how this environment differs from traditional, nationally bounded notions of domestic politics and state action. I then discuss how both the transnationalization of politics and regional economic integration change the arena for strategic action by labor groups, how this new environment affects the labor movement in Mexico, and the kinds of strategies Mexican and U.S. labor unions have begun to pursue in this context. Finally, I consider whether the side agreement on labor standards that was developed as a complement to the NAFTA represents an example of institutionalization of this political internationalization, thus potentially facilitating further transnational collaboration among unions, or whether, alternatively, the side accord buttresses national institutions and state autonomy in ways that could constrain labor's strategic use of the international arena.

The Internationalization of National Politics: Shifting the Strategic Arena

Several authors have tried recently to describe and reconceptualize what appears to be a new global phenomenon, variously described as the "interpenetration of international and domestic spheres" or the "internationalization of domestic politics." They argue that what is emerging in domestic and international politics is not adequately captured by existing theories of international relations, which tend to maintain the "hard division" between domestic and foreign policies and stress the role of the state in defining and determining these policies (Chalmers 1991; Sikkink 1991). While the literature on "interdependence" comes closer in its acknowledgment of the multiple influences on state policies, it tends to ignore the role that nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and transnational social movements play in favor of the role played by foreign governments, international organizations, and transnational corporations (Sikkink 1991:36). In contrast, the "internationalization of domestic politics" refers to the pressures and influence of multiple international and domestic actors (acting in concert with international allies) on the domestic political process. These actors include international organizations and foundations, international and domestic nongovernmental organizations, and social movements, as well as foreign governments. Thus, in contrast to traditional notions of the role of states in international relations, multiple nongovernmental groups, and not just states, engage in "international relations" (Chalmers 1991).

Those who argue that the internationalization of domestic politics is a new, important phenomenon in the world today are quick to point out that states remain important and are in most cases the key determinants of domestic and foreign policies. Nonetheless, the numerous other groups that act in the international arena and that act to influence other nations' domestic policies must increasingly be taken into account in order to understand the political processes shaping particular issues in many countries. These international influences are also reshaping traditional notions of national sovereignty, generally understood as a state's exclusive right to determine what happens within its national borders. One issue-area that represents an obvious challenge to conventional definitions of national sovereignty is human rights. As Kathryn Sikkink (1991, 1993) has pointed out, an individual citizen's appeal to universal standards of human rights in challenging his or her own government is probably the clearest example of the undermining of national sovereignty. A very different but important example is provided by the European Community, where member states have voluntarily ceded some degree of sovereignty to supranational institutions within the community.

In the case of human rights, a range of international actors, including international organizations, foundations, and NGOs, as well as foreign governments, have been influential in pressuring governments to alter their practices or to investigate individual cases of rights violations. Often, these international actors provide support to domestic NGOs, granting them a leverage vis-a-vis their own government that they would not have otherwise had. The confluence of pressures from international organizations, foreign governments, and domestic NGOs/social movements was especially clear during the 1970s in Latin America, when, for example, the U.S. administration of Jimmy Carter, Amnesty International, U.S. solidarity committees, and domestic groups such as the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo generated limited but significant pressure on the repressive Argentine military regime to halt human rights abuses.

Another issue-area where international actors increasingly shape domestic politics is the environment. Again, international organizations such as Greenpeace, acting in alliance with domestic environmental groups and some foreign governments, are creating important pressures on states to address the problem of environmental degradation (Keck 1991). Whereas the appeal in the case of human rights is primarily a moral one, and the assumption is that all individuals, regardless of nationality, possess certain rights, in the case of the environment the assumption is that the planet's natural resources are the responsibility of all and that states do not have exclusive rights to determine how these resources are exploited. In Latin America, moreover, environmental preservation is increasingly tied up with the cultural and even physical preservation of indigenous groups. The rights of indigenous groups is fast emerging as an issue-area drawing the attention of international actors. In these cases, a multiplicity of international and domestic NGOs and social movements have pressured national governments to change the way they address both sets of issues and have helped to place these issues on the agenda of states and international agencies.

The issue of labor rights shares some of the characteristics of both the human rights and environmental issues. The labor rights conventions of the International Labor Organization, for example, treat labor rights as human rights in their universality, even though signatories to the ILO conventions have often belied this by their actions. Such conventions as those concerning forced or child labor may not be followed by all nations, yet governments that permit such practices are universally condemned. Still, developing

country governments in particular have frequently argued, on both national sovereignty and economic backwardness grounds, that they have a right to exploit the environment or to violate labor rights in the interest of national economic development. They and others argue that it is unfair for advanced nations to restrict developing countries' ability to exploit their environmental and human resources in order to pass through the same stages of development as the wealthier countries. Such an expectation, goes the argument, constitutes the imposition of advanced countries' standards on poorer countries and has raised charges of imperialism. Thus, the lack of adequate housing or social services and low wages is justified because of the stage of development at which a particular country finds itself; U.S. and British industrialization, it is argued, were based on similar conditions. Here the conflict between universal rights and national sovereignty is sharply drawn.

The formation of regional trading blocs may be diluting the power of this argument in relations between richer and poorer countries. National labor movements and environmental groups in particular have raised charges of unfair competition in cases where trade barriers are lifted between nations of widely varying labor and environmental standards. The argument of economic necessity due to a country's low level of development has been replaced to some extent by that which says conditions should be "harmonized" so as to eliminate unfair advantages for the country that has lower standards. The European example in this area has set a precedent for similar demands for harmonization in a North American free trade area, in spite of the important differences between the two projects. In the case of NAFTA, the Mexican government has downplayed its developing nation status and insisted that it wants "trade, not aid", even though in the negotiation process it has raised the issue of assistance to meet higher environmental standards and it has shown some support for the idea of a North American regional development bank that could help ease the adjustment costs of a transition to freer trade. Mexico's (ultimately successful) attempts to become a member of the OECD and its government's argument that free trade will bring Mexico into the "First World" further undermine claims that Mexico needs an exemption from environmental and labor standards for its economic development

Formal regional integration may lend a further legitimacy to discussions of labor rights and standards, where the process of economic integration or the internationalization of the economy by themselves do not. While the process of Mexico's integration with the U.S. economy has been occurring over a period of decades, traditionally there has been little concern with (and more than a little misunderstanding about) what happened inside Mexico's borders. In particular, U.S. labor, environmental, and other citizens' groups had minimal contact with their Mexican counterparts. Throughout most of the 1980s, members of these groups were more familiar with the politics of Central American countries and the details of U.S. policy in this region than they were with their neighbor to the south, with whom they shared a two thousand mile border. Also during the 1980s, however, the expansion of the maquiladora industry, the restructuring of both U.S. and Mexican industry, and Mexico's unilateral economic opening drove many U.S. companies to Mexico in search of lower labor costs. These developments led some labor unions to begin to search for new collaborative strategies with their counterparts across the border in order to improve their bargaining position with their transnational employers (Middlebrook 1992). There were few such efforts, however, and these were generally undermined by numerous obstacles, not the least of which were mistrust,

cultural stereotyping, and the lack of support for such collaboration among both national union leaderships and rank-and-file members.¹

It was not until Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari proposed the creation of a North American Free Trade Agreement to President George Bush in 1990 that labor unions and numerous grassroots groups in the United States, Mexico, and Canada became truly interested in one another. In particular, Congress's debate in 1991 over granting the president fast-track authority mobilized opposition groups with diverse interests into forming coalitions in order to defeat fast-track and then NAFTA (Thorup 1991).² These coalitions adopted a variety of strategies: They lobbied their congressional representatives to oppose fast-track and NAFTA, they educated their own members on what they saw to be the dangers of free trade, and they looked across the borders for allies. Suddenly, cross-border alliances and coalition formation were seen as crucial in the political battle to defeat what had become an important domestic policy issue, and not "merely" an international trade agreement. Canadian opponents of the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement and of NAFTA were especially eager to convince Mexican and U.S. counterparts that they should fight to oppose the agreement, based on their experience with free trade in Canada.

The NAFTA debate has acted as a catalyst to the formation of cross-border alliances. Since 1990, there has been an explosion of contacts between Canadian, Mexican, and U.S. nongovernmental groups.³ These have taken a variety of forms: site visits, educational tours and workshops, meetings attended by representatives of organizations from the three countries, regular communication and exchange of information (aided by faxes and access to computer networks), joint political strategizing around NAFTA, solidarity actions around specific conflicts, pressuring of government officials and politicians to concern themselves with events in the other country, and so on. Cross-border collaboration has taken place at both the grassroots level of people-to-people contacts and among organization leaders.⁴ This development of direct, people-to-people networking in the three countries has been called "citizen diplomacy" and represents a novel dimension in U.S.-Mexican relations. Some have argued that this citizen diplomacy can act as an important, bottom-up check on traditional diplomatic relations and government-to-government exchanges (Thorup 1991; 1993).

This cross-border coalition formation took place in a unique historical context, one in which Mexico's economic and political future had come to depend—as never before—on a decision to be made in the U.S. Congress. At the same time, NAFTA's passage was by no means a foregone conclusion. This meant that the political process in the United States was particularly porous on this issue. Congress was not only bombarded by the lobbying efforts of the Mexican government (producing the most expensive single-issue lobbying campaign by any foreign government thus far), but also by domestic constituencies, especially labor and environmental groups, and by the congressional testimony of Mexican citizens—representatives of popular organizations, Mexican NGOs, intellectuals, and even individuals who felt wronged by the actions of U.S. companies in Mexico.⁵ Whereas before the international activities of Mexican NGOs consisted, in the best of cases, of contacts with foundations or other social movements, now they were "lobbying at the centers of political decision making, especially the U.S. Congress," where, increasingly, issues relating to Mexico were being decided (Hernandez Navarro 1993:10).

Government officials and legislators have also crossed borders in recent years. U.S. politicians flocked to Mexico, especially the border, to learn more about the concerns of their constituents, both those who favored and opposed the agreement. Mexican government officials have been especially active in the U.S. political arena. Not only did they spend millions on lobbying and influential consultants in Washington, D.C., but they targeted the op-ed pages of major U.S. newspapers and traveled throughout the country to campaign for NAFTA (Dresser 1993). The Mexican government especially tried to win over Hispanics in the United States in the hopes that they could act as a strong "pro-Mexico" lobby in Washington.

The political opposition in Mexico has also campaigned in the United States among Mexican immigrants, and announced plans to lobby the U.S. Congress and President Clinton on electoral and human rights issues (Hughes 1993a: 12). Competition between the Salinas administration and the opposition headed by Cuauhtemoc Cardenas for the hearts and minds of Mexican citizens residing in the United States even prompted the Mexican government to respond with an international version of *Solidaridad*, the government's public works program targeted at the poor (Hughes 1993b: 13). However, it was in the political process and debate surrounding NAFTA that the interpenetration of the domestic politics of the United States and Mexico emerged most clearly.

* That domestic politics have been "internationalized" by NAFTA is especially visible within Mexico. A country long ruled by strong nationalist sentiments and mistrust for its northern neighbor, Mexico's political leaders have typically bristled at any criticism coming from the United States and felt little compunction to address its concerns. Because of its proximity to the United States and the history of Mexico-U.S. relations, Mexico has clung more steadfastly to notions of national sovereignty than most other Latin American nations. These strong nationalist tendencies made themselves felt in the economic arena as well as in politics, even though Mexico's economy has always been strongly dependent on the United States. However, the gradual opening of Mexico's economy in the mid-1980s and President Salinas's strong support for NAFTA have made it more difficult to sustain the nationalist discourse within Mexico and with other countries. Moreover, economic liberalization and restructuring in Mexico are dismantling the regime's domestic support coalition, affecting organized labor in particular, which constituted the strongest pillar of support during moments of nationalist or statist retrenchment vis-a-vis the United States or even the Mexican private sector.

The NAFTA political process has made the Mexican government uncharacteristically responsive to outside criticism of its domestic policies and has shaped the reform process within Mexico. U.S. concerns with Mexico's environmental problems and lax enforcement of its laws led President Salinas to revise environmental legislation and take a series of strongly visible measures aimed at assuaging these concerns. Complaints about corruption, drug trafficking, and human rights violations—issues that had led to tensions in U.S.-Mexican relations in the past—led President Salinas to step up drug interdiction efforts, clean up the judicial police force, and appoint a former human rights advocate to the position of attorney general. On political issues the Mexican government has been more tentative. Nonetheless, charges of authoritarianism from outside as well as pressure from domestic political opponents have pressured the regime to recognize opposition electoral victories in some states and to propose a series of reforms, including campaign spending limits and the expansion of opposition representation in the senate.⁶

Mexico's authoritarian political system has traditionally constrained the ability of domestic political opponents to influence the political process via elections or other internal mechanisms. In recent years, however, Mexican political reform has increasingly been spurred and shaped by what happens in the United States. In extreme cases, a critical article in the *Wall Street Journal* or the *New York Times* can lead to a speedier change in government policy than years of domestic political pressure. It is little wonder, then, that some Mexican intellectuals, labor groups, human rights organizations, and opposition parties have used the U.S. political arena to press for change in their own country. The Mexican left in particular has overcome historic mistrust in order to build alliances with U.S. and Canadian groups. With these allies, they have learned to use the U.S. media and learned how the U.S. Congress works. These are lessons not likely to fade after the issue of NAFTA passes from the screen. Meanwhile, the NAFTA debate has increased the contact points between international actors and the domestic political process in both the United States and Mexico, and it has expanded the possible arenas available to nongovernmental actors for strategic action on a range of issues, not all of them pertaining strictly to NAFTA.

The Transnational Arena and Labor Strategies

A wide variety of groups have engaged in cross-border networking and the creation of alliances. While labor organizations have also become involved in these kinds of activities, labor's participation is both more complicated and in some ways more important than that of other kinds of groups. Labor is an especially important actor in regional economic integration because one of the chief attractions of Mexico as an investment site for U.S. companies is its low labor costs. Low wages and labor standards are also among the chief reasons NAFTA's opponents fear the agreement. While the environmental question also sparks concern in the United States, no issue is so central to what NAFTA is about as the labor issue.

The central importance of Mexican labor for NAFTA also explains why labor's ability to make use of new arenas for strategic action is more complicated than it is for other groups. For over a decade, Mexico suffered under the burden of an enormous foreign debt, high inflation, and minimal or negative growth. Government leaders implemented a program of economic and industrial restructuring that had devastating consequences for labor. Real wages declined by 66 percent between 1982 and 1990, unemployment and underemployment increased, and government subsidies to basic consumer items were cut (Cornelius and Craig 1991). At the same time, labor protest was more strictly controlled than in the previous decade—many of the more visible strikes were declared illegal or nonexistent; industrial restructuring led to a number of layoffs and plant closings that tended to affect more democratic and militant unions; the political influence of major labor organizations such as the CTM declined precipitously (Cook 1994). Mexican labor organizations thus emerged from the decade of the 1980s greatly weakened by the experience. Under President Salinas, the burden of the slow and unsteady economic recovery has continued to rest with labor, as the government has continued to hold down wages in its fight against inflation.

Not only Mexican unions' economic weakness but their growing political weakness and lack of autonomy also complicate labor's search for new strategies. Most labor organizations are subordinate to the government and the ruling Institutional

Revolutionary Party (PRI). Union registration is regulated by the Labor Ministry and can be highly politicized; determination of the legality of a strike is often a similarly political process.⁷ The largest and most important labor confederation, the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM), has traditionally operated by elite-level bargaining and by exchanging political support and control of worker demands and dissent for political positions in the party and Congress and privileged access to the government. It has even resorted to violence against its own member unions during labor conflicts. Dissident movements within unions are often quickly repressed or contained. In a context of economic weakness, often brutal restructuring, declining political influence, and weak political opposition, labor unions have become even more dependent on the government (and increasingly, the president). At the same time, while the government has tried to distance itself from traditional labor leaders who historically have supported the regime and has acted to decrease labor's presence in the PRI, it still seems hesitant to break completely with labor's support in the ever more complicated presidential succession process.⁸ This continued reliance on labor support therefore gives the labor sector some minimal bargaining power and keeps unions interested in supporting the system rather than in striking out in opposition to the regime.

Because of Mexican labor's dependence on the regime, it has been difficult for most unions to publicly criticize their government's support for NAFTA either in Mexico or abroad.⁹ At the same time, NAFTA has been widely touted as something that will be good for Mexico, bringing more investment, more jobs, lower consumer prices and greater consumer choice, better quality products, and eventually, higher salaries. These factors make it extremely difficult for Mexican labor unions to campaign actively against NAFTA. They have also made it difficult for Canadian, U.S., and Mexican unions to find common ground.¹⁰ The AFL-CIO's frustration with the CTM's position on this issue, for example, led them to initiate talks with a much smaller, less influential, but more independent labor federation in Mexico, the Authentic Labor Front (Frente Autentico del Trabajo, FAT).

Nonetheless, a number of cross-border activities have taken place among labor unions, and labor groups have used this new, transnational arena to expand their range of strategies for protecting their interests.¹¹ The remainder of this section will examine the types of strategies that various Mexican and U.S. labor organizations have pursued and what factors have influenced their choice of strategies.

National Political Bargaining

Peak labor organizations tend to privilege political bargaining with their governments as their primary strategy. Although such organizations may also use their international alliances, their primary bargaining strength lies in the role these organizations play in the national political arena, especially their role in supporting political parties. Thus, in the United States this strategy is followed by national officials of the AFL-CIO, for whom the Democratic Clinton administration offers more opportunities than in the recent past to wield political influence. NAFTA is one of several issues in which U.S. labor has an interest; the others include health care reform and labor law reform. Because these are issues decided by Congress, national labor strategy tends to focus on the legislative arena.

The CTM in Mexico has also privileged this strategy of political bargaining in the national arena, without generally resorting to the transnational arena in order to exert pressure on the government. In part this is so because the leader of the CTM has a strong aversion to international "intervention" in Mexico's domestic affairs. Other reasons are that the CTM has found little common ground with the AFL-CIO or the Canadian Labour Congress on the NAFTA issue, and because the Mexican labor organization continues to wield some minimal political influence with its own government. Labor continues to play a role (albeit an ever declining one) within the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), in the presidential succession, and in legitimating the government's wage-containment policy. Moreover, state-supported challenges to the CTM's hegemony within the Mexican labor movement by rival organizations such as the Revolutionary Confederation of Workers and Peasants (CROC) and the recently formed Federation of Goods and Services Unions (FESEBES) have led the CTM to redouble its efforts to prove its superior representativeness and capacity for control of worker demands to the regime. While U.S. labor organizations tend to target the legislative arena under this strategy, Mexican labor targets the executive, reflecting Mexico's strongly presidentialist political system.

Whereas the CTM is the key Mexican labor organization that pursues this national political strategy, other organizations have also privileged political bargaining with the state. One of these is the FESEBES, the relatively new labor federation that became a competitor of the CTM for state favors under the Salinas administration. Dominated by the once independent telephone workers' union, the FESEBES traded in political independence for the government's support for the new federation and for its support in the telephone union's bargaining with the newly privatized telephone company. Unions within the FESEBES have also adopted a more varied set of strategies, however. They have participated in trilateral exchanges with U.S. and Canadian labor and other citizens' groups. The telephone workers' union signed an agreement with the U.S. Communications Workers of America and the Communications and Electrical Workers of Canada, pledging to defend worker rights in the face of regional integration and to exchange information on changes in the industry.¹² However, such contacts have been driven more by the union's effort to prepare itself for bargaining with TeleTonos de Mexico than to join in a common effort to defeat NAFTA. The telephone workers' union has stated its support for NAFTA, whereas its partners in the agreement are opposed.

The case of another union in the FESEBES further illustrates the important role of domestic political alliances in bargaining with the employer. The Mexican Electrical Workers' Union (SME), one of the founding members of the FESEBES, is a small, 35,000-member union representing employees of the Center Light and Power Company, a parastate firm facing liquidation. The SME was drawn into a close relationship with President Salinas in order to receive his protection and ensure its survival in the creation of a new power company. While the SME did participate in trilateral meetings and even developed its version of a bill of workers' rights to be appended to the NAFTA, it did not adopt a strong position on this issue within Mexico because of its need to ally with a more powerful partner in the political battle for its survival.¹³

Because of their location in services dominated by domestic private capital or by the state, most of the unions in the FESEBES are likely to continue in the future to center their political strategy within national boundaries rather than in the transnational arena,

in spite of their initial contacts with groups outside of Mexico. At the same time, and perhaps more importantly, both the SME and the telephone workers union lack the political autonomy necessary to build upon external alliances.

Transnational Collective Bargaining

This strategy involves cross-border cooperation in bargaining with a common multinational employer. While there are numerous cases of cross-border solidarity between unions, more concerted strategizing is rare. Nonetheless, one case that has received recent attention is that of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), an AFL-CIO affiliate, and the Sinaloa-based National Farmworkers' Union (Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores Agrícolas, SNTOAC), a CTM affiliate (Nauman 1993:14; Moody and McGinn 1992). Both have agreed to work together to improve conditions in each union by assisting each other in collective negotiations with their employer, the Campbell Soup Company. According to union leaders, this strategy has proven effective in increasing wages and benefits for members in both countries, although Mexican wages remain far lower than those of their U.S. counterparts.¹⁴

The FLOC took the initiative to locate its Mexican counterpart in 1987, well before NAFTA had even been contemplated, in response to Campbell's threat to buy its tomato paste from Mexico if U.S. workers made it "too expensive" to do so in the United States. The U.S. union then developed a strategy that consisted of improving conditions for Mexican workers so that the company could not use the disparity in costs against U.S. workers. The FLOC approached CTM patriarch Fidel Velazquez to secure his assistance in contacting the SNTOAC, and obtained support from both the CTM and AFL-CIO to set up a commission for ongoing talks between the two unions. Support from both the AFL-CIO and the CTM appears to have been crucial in making this transnational cooperation successful.

Transnational Organizing

While U.S. unions do not operate inside of Mexico, there are some initial cases of U.S.-Mexican cooperation in union organizing, most notably in the maquila industry along the border. The maquila sector has the lowest union density of any other manufacturing activity in Mexico. Where unions do operate in the maquila, these tend to be dominated by the official confederations: the CTM, the CROC, or the CROM. In some ways this sector is the most open to organizing by unions, even though there are many obstacles. Employers discourage unions, the workers themselves may even shun them, and the official unions can be extremely powerful and effective at stamping out any efforts to organize workers into more independent or democratic unions.¹⁵

Nonetheless, one independent labor federation in Mexico has begun to try to make inroads into the maquiladora sector. This is a relatively small labor federation, the FAT, that has been extremely active in the transnational arena.¹⁶ In Mexico, it is one of the founding members of an anti-NAFTA network called the Mexican Action Network on Free Trade (Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio, RMALC). The FAT and the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America (UE) have entered into what they call a "strategic organizing alliance" and have decided to cooperate in organizing maquila workers, targeting those runaway plants that employed UE-

represented shops in the United States (Witt 1992; Browne and Sims 1993:5). Although the unions involved are relatively small and the results so far are mixed, the alliance has received a great deal of publicity and has inspired other forms of direct assistance to Mexican unions.

Some indication that transnational organizing is occurring in the agricultural sector has also appeared recently. As part of their cooperative strategy, both the FLOC and the SNTUAC are working to organize nonunion farm labor in Texas and in south-central Mexico. The Teamsters are also contacting employees of U.S.-based agricultural industries in Mexico's south-central farm belt (Moody and McGinn 1992). Teamsters Local 912 from California has been especially active in collaborating with Mexican employees of Green Giant, which transferred its vegetable canning and packing operations from Watsonville to Mexico.

U.S. unions have also launched "adopt an organizer" campaigns to support Mexican union activists who have been fired for their organizing work. The program funds Mexican workers who devote themselves full-time to organizing in the border plants. U.S. unions involved in the campaign so far include the United Electrical Workers, Teamsters, and UAW locals. Thus far the program has been targeted at a Zenith electronics assembly plant in Reynosa and at the Ford plant in Cuautitlan, among others (NAWWN 1993:10; Kalmijn 1994; *Labor Notes* 1994).

Transnational Solidarity/Networking

This strategy encompasses different kinds of activities, from participation in trilateral meetings to solidarity actions in response to specific conflicts, to speaking tours and site visits. In the last five years labor organizations throughout the continent have engaged in activities of this type. For most these contacts are a starting point, leading to closer cooperation with counterparts and to the adoption of one of the transnational strategies outlined above. For others, visits and meetings do not lead to more formal communication. In any case, the number of contacts that has occurred is significant, especially when one considers the sparse communication among Canadian, U.S., and Mexican unions prior to 1990, especially at the grassroots level.

For many, a series of trilateral exchanges that brought together leaders and representatives from a broad range of unions and nonlabor organizations provided the initial contact. In these trilateral meetings participants discussed free trade, what positions groups should adopt, and whether and how they should cooperate in defending their interests (see Eisenstadt 1993).¹⁷ Participants stressed that NAFTA did not only represent a threat to jobs, wages, and working conditions, but also an opportunity to develop trilateral connections in order to help shape the continuing process of integration (Trilateral Exchange 1991:3). In the first meeting, the Mexican side included top representatives from some of the principal labor organizations in Mexico, including the telephone workers, the electrical workers, the airline pilots' association, and the teachers' union, as well as representatives of the FAT and of the CTM. This meeting marked one of the first in which both official and independent union representatives appeared together. From the labor movement on the U.S. side were representatives from the Communications Workers of America (CWA), United Auto Workers (UAW), Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers' Union (ACTWU), International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU), the AFL-CIO, and the Coalition for Justice in the

Maquiladoras, the International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE), and the Farm Labor Organizing Committee FLOC.

Several intra-industry meetings have also been set up in the auto sector, including one by the Chrysler-Ramos Arizpe union and the CTM, to which U.S. and Canadian unions were invited (Middlebrook 1992), and another sponsored by the Transnationals Information Exchange in Mexico in 1991. At the TIE meeting, auto workers from the Big Three (Chrysler, Ford, and General Motors) discussed developing action plans by company and formed a trinational committee to coordinate industrywide cooperation and networking (Moody and McGinn 1992). Canadian, U.S., and Mexican electrical workers' unions also met in Mexico in February 1994 to discuss common concerns. This meeting was significant, given that the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) and the Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas (SME) carry more clout in their respective countries than either the UE or the FAT.¹⁸

Labor conflicts at U.S. auto plants in Mexico have drawn the attention of the UAW and the AFL-CIO and led them to lodge complaints about the handling of such conflicts. Among the most important of these cases has been the ongoing series of conflicts at the Ford plant in Cuautitlan, outside of Mexico City. In 1990, the struggle over union representation left one worker dead at the hands of hired thugs who ambushed workers at the plant.¹⁹ The case revealed the collusion of the Mexican government, Ford Motor Company, and the CTM in the repression of labor dissent and of union democracy in Mexican plants.²⁰ The publicity this case received and the degree of solidarity shown by U.S. unions was unprecedented. The Canadian Auto Workers and some UAW locals lent their support by publicizing the events in their own countries, pressuring government officials to complain about the matter, and by organizing a trinational day of protest in which workers wore black ribbons on the anniversary of the Mexican auto workers' death. The UAW locals in St. Paul and in Kansas City, Missouri, were especially active in organizing support for Cuautitlan workers; they formed a Mexico-U.S.-Canada Solidarity Task Force and sent members to Mexico to witness union elections in 1991. The national UAW, meanwhile, was initially reluctant to engage in a nationwide campaign (Browne and Sims 1993:6). These UAW locals and other U.S. groups continue to follow events at Ford-Cuautitlan. With the help of the North American Worker-to-Worker Network and electronic networks, supporters have begun to adopt the kinds of international action campaigns (telegrams to Mexican labor authorities and political leaders) that Amnesty International has long engaged in to draw attention to human rights violations around the world (NAWWN 1993:26).²¹

In the Cuautitlan case, Mexican auto workers chiefly received support in their fight for union democracy; collaborative collective bargaining or other kinds of issues were not at the forefront (Middlebrook 1992). Such demonstrations of solidarity nonetheless annoyed the Mexican government and the CTM, both of which threatened the workers and pressured them to abandon their external alliances.²² However, in subsequent bargaining with Ford, the Cuautitlan union was able to draw on added leverage gained through external alliances. It agreed not to enlist the help of U.S. allies if Ford would meet some of its demands during collective bargaining. Authorities have discouraged similar cooperative measures from being taken by auto workers at the Ford plants in Chihuahua and Hermosillo (Middlebrook 1992).

In another case from the auto industry, workers from the Volkswagen plant in Puebla, Mexico, enjoyed the support of their German counterparts during a long strike

in 1987. The German workers refused to step up production to compensate for the loss due to the strike in Mexico (Garza and Mendez 1987b). This solidarity helped the union to escape the fate that befell other auto unions in that year. Managers at the Ford-Cuautitlan auto plant, for example, fired the workers during a strike, closed down the plant, and later reopened, rehiring some of the workforce at lower benefit and wage levels and with new work rules (Garza and Mendez 1987a; Middlebrook 1989:86, 92). Workers at Volkswagen were nonetheless confronted with these same tactics and finally defeated during their 1992 strike (Nauman 1992; Othdn Quiroz and Mendez 1992).

During a strike in 1990 at the Modelo Brewery, Teamsters in Chicago supported the strike by refusing to deliver shipments of the imported beer. A boycott of the product saw limited success in the United States, but was somewhat more successful in Canada and Europe. The Modelo workers belonged to a CTM-affiliated union, and their enlistment of foreign support drew the wrath of Fidel Velazquez, who also did everything in his power to defeat the strike (La Botz 1992). Other solidarity actions included a corporate campaign by Teamsters Local 912 against Green Giant products in cooperation with striking Mexican employees of the company (Moody and McGinn 1992:48).

The number of site visits and other kinds of exchanges and collaboration that have occurred in recent years are too numerous to mention here, but some examples include the establishment of U.S. and Mexican "sister schools", arranged between U.S. teachers and Mexican teachers belonging to the National Coordinating Committee of Education Workers, a large dissident current within the National Teachers Union (Witt 1992). Announcements for tours to Mexico for U.S. labor groups and others cover the pages of publications such as the *Free Trade Mailing*, and the Detroit-based *Labor Notes* sponsored a Cross-Border Organizing Strategies School on the Mexican border in May 1994.

The maquiladora region has received particularly strong attention since the NAFTA vote. One maquiladora in Tijuana, P12sticos Bajacal (a division of Boston-based Carlisle Plastics), first received publicity prior to the NAFTA vote when a bus of U.S. union activists and observers tried to visit the plant and were turned away by plant management. In December 1994 human rights and union observers witnessed union elections at the maquiladora plant. The company had signed a contract with a union affiliated with the Regional Confederation of Mexican Workers (CROM); workers only learned of the existence of this union once they sought to organize themselves under the auspices of another labor organization, the Revolutionary Labor Confederation (COR). During the representation election, workers were forced to vote out in the open and made to sign their names beside their vote. Elections were finally halted because it was feared that plant managers would retaliate against the dissident workers. U.S. observers, shocked and frustrated by what they had witnessed, felt that by publicizing the case they were at least able to prevent retaliation against the COR supporters (Bacon 1993; Kalmijn 1994).

A couple of additional cases that received much publicity in the United States during the winter of 1993-94 were the firings of workers who had been trying to organize a union at a General Electric maquiladora plant in Ciudad Juarez and at Honeywell in Chihuahua. In both cases, the organization trying to organize the workers was the independent FAT. Its allies in the United States, the UE and the Teamsters, reacted quickly to the firings. UE leaders wrote to the U.S. Congress and pressed General Electric to reverse its position. Teamsters began carrying out leafleting campaigns at

General Electric plant in the United States; both unions are giving financial support to the FAT. In January 1994, the unions finally succeeded in getting General Electric to reinstate six of eleven workers who had been fired in Ciudad Juarez. Efforts continued to force the company to reinstate the remaining fired workers. Teamsters president Ron Carey wrote President Bill Clinton, warning him that unless the labor violations at the Honeywell and General Electric plants were resolved, they could become "an international symbol of the violations of human rights now that NAFTA has passed."²³ The UE is also trying to get Congress to begin an investigation into the labor practices of U.S. corporations in Mexico (*Labor Notes* 1994:14).

Perhaps most significant, on February 15, 1994, the UE and Teamsters became the first unions to file complaints to the new National Administrative Office (NAO) set up under the terms of the NAFTA labor side agreement (Rose 1994:A2). The U.S. unions argued that by firing the union organizers, the U.S. companies in Mexico were violating the spirit of the trade agreement. In April 1994 the U.S. NAO decided to accept the submissions and planned to hold hearings on the cases later in the year. The evolution of these cases will set an important precedent for subsequent filings, and may indicate whether the new institutions set up by the side accords will complement or complicate grassroots alliances and organizing efforts.

Political Bargaining in the Transnational Arena

Another strategy that some labor groups have adopted involves political bargaining in the transnational arena. This strategy was directly linked to the NAFTA debate, and involved both direct and indirect lobbying of U.S. congressional representatives by Mexican groups. Indirect lobbying occurred through the exchange of information and networking with U.S.-based organizations, which then pressured the U.S. Congress. Direct efforts included congressional testimony by individuals and representatives of Mexican groups who reported on conditions for workers in Mexico. The strategy was largely aimed at defeating NAFTA in the U.S. Congress and with the U.S. public, although it also helped to secure support for side agreements and consideration of compensation mechanisms for likely "losers" of free trade.

At the same time, because of the Mexican government's sensitivity to outside criticism, Mexican coalitions such as the Mexican Action Network were able to gain access to their own government because of the attention they received and the role they played in the United States debate on NAFTA. Under circumstances in which the network would not otherwise have played much of a political role within the country, its use of transnational spaces gave it greater leverage within national boundaries. To the extent that the network has played a role in providing information about Mexican labor and environmental conditions to the U.S. Congress, unions, and other groups, it has also acted indirectly to reform domestic politics in Mexico, precisely because the Mexican government has acted to preempt criticism of Mexican practices by those who would decide NAFTA's fate.

Transnational political bargaining represents a new strategic arena for labor and other groups in Mexico. As with its counterparts in the United States and Canada, the Mexican Action Network is composed of a diverse set of organizations that have come together through their loose opposition to the NAFTA. As such, after the NAFTA vote is over, it is unlikely that much will hold these coalitions together. In the meantime,

however, the use of the transnational arena by the Mexican groups has raised their visibility and political effectiveness. This is significant given that the network represents a small but burgeoning set of independent popular organizations and single-issue groups, such as environmentalists and human rights groups. The alliances they have forged and the skills they have learned over the last few years may bode them well in future negotiations with the Mexican government on human rights, the environment, and even democratization. Within this coalition, labor groups are perhaps the most constrained, given the political controls on labor and the current economic vulnerability of unions. In addition, it would appear that only those labor groups with weaker ties to official labor organizations and the government, and which otherwise are too small or nonstrategic to represent a significant political or economic threat, are free to participate in such activities.

NAFTA and the Side Agreements

The concerns of U.S. labor unions, the election of a Democratic president in 1992, and pressure by a host of citizens' groups throughout the electoral campaign led to the negotiation of labor and environmental side accords to accompany the NAFTA. The inclusion of these accords reflected the new administration's efforts to make NAFTA more palatable to opponents by addressing concerns over the deterioration of environmental conditions and lower environmental and labor standards in Mexico. Such lower standards, it was argued, would make for unfair competition, would tend to drive U.S. standards down, and would cause further exploitation of the environment and of Mexican workers.

From the beginning, the negotiation of the side deals was a tricky issue, and one more aimed at assuaging U.S. congressional opponents and key lobby groups than ensuring a commitment to higher standards. Both the Canadian and Mexican governments were opposed to the idea of side agreements and to the need for them, and feared that some of the enforcement mechanisms and institutional arrangements being suggested in side accords would threaten "national sovereignty." U.S. negotiators therefore had a very difficult task: to appease moderate critics of NAFTA in order to secure congressional approval, while not alienating the Canadian and Mexican governments.

Nor had it been made publicly clear what was meant by "labor standards." In a preliminary report on the draft options presented by an interagency subgroup of the National Economic Council, possible scenarios for the side agreements ranged from the inclusion of a broad definition of labor rights and standards, such as tying wages to productivity and securing the right to organize and to collective bargaining, to a minimal treatment of labor standards (or "basic rights"), such as ensuring enforcement of child labor laws and health and safety standards.²⁴ Similarly, positions wavered regarding the nature of the institutions that would be set up to oversee compliance with these standards, as well as the nature of the enforcement mechanisms. Through it all, U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor repeatedly insisted that the side accords would "have teeth."

The NAFTA debate and discussion surrounding the side accords brought attention to a series of problems that afflict Mexican labor: low wages, lax enforcement of child labor laws and of health and safety standards, and political restrictions on the right to

strike, to organize, and the right to choose one's union representatives. The labor side accord offered the possibility to address some of these issues by, ultimately, subjecting allegations of rights violations to a supranational institution for scrutiny. Provided that individual workers and labor union locals as well as unions could file complaints with the commission, such an arrangement offered the promise of institutionalizing a process of external scrutiny that was begun with the NAFTA debate and which has been shown to be more effective than domestic pressure alone. Thus, the final outcome of the labor side agreement—its definition of labor standards, institutional arrangements, and enforcement mechanisms—could be crucial for determining whether it would indeed be able to help improve the conditions of workers in Mexico. If, on the contrary, the labor side accord merely paid lip service to labor standards and contained meek enforcement mechanisms, then the result for Mexican workers could be worse than if no accord existed.

Negotiations among the three governments over labor and environmental side accords were completed on August 13, 1993, and the final text of the accords appeared one month later. Based on this text and available summary analyses, the labor side accord appears to fall far short of what would be required to ensure effective enforcement of laws and respect for labor rights.²⁵ Labor and environmental leaders and many Democratic politicians indicated that the accords would not affect their opposition to the trade agreement, while business leaders in the U.S. and Mexico expressed satisfaction with the accords (Andrews 1993).

The key problem with the labor side accord is that it is unlikely to address conditions among Mexican workers that constitute unfair competition for U.S. workers. There are several problems with the accord as it is now written that lead me to this conclusion: 1) The restricted scope of the labor side agreement; 2) the lengthy dispute settlement process; 3) weak enforcement provisions; and 4) the limited political autonomy of the commission.

The restricted scope of the agreement is probably its most troublesome aspect. According to the labor side accord, persons or organizations can file complaints relating to a persistent pattern of failure to enforce domestic laws in the areas of child labor, health and safety, and the minimum wage, and in areas that affect trade between the parties. Aspects of industrial relations, such as the rights to strike, organize, and bargain collectively are not subject to the dispute settlement process contemplated in the accord. In addition, the parties to the accord agree to enforce their existing laws; there is no reference to the creation of new legislation nor to harmonization of standards. The problem with this narrower definition of labor standards is that it provides no recourse beyond that which already exists for unions and workers whose rights to organize, strike, and bargain collectively are curtailed by employers and by the Mexican government. These restrictions have long prevailed in Mexico, in spite of labor legislation that prevents it and in spite of Mexico's participation in ILO conventions covering these areas. Violations of rights to organize and to strike are especially common in the maquiladora sector, for instance, but violations have also occurred throughout more advanced sectors, such as the auto industry. Removing industrial relations from the scope of the accord thus protects the Mexican government from external scrutiny of its political control over labor unions, an aspect that it has clearly declared corresponds to "national sovereignty."

Other problems relate to the dispute settlement process and enforcement. The process itself is constructed so as to not reach the point of fines or trade sanctions.

Instead, consultations among ministers will be the likely response for the majority of complaints. Any member of the Ministerial Council may petition the others to create an evaluation committee of experts (ECE) to study a particular issue, as long as it falls under the restricted category of rights described above. A pattern of failure to enforce any of the other domestic labor laws mentioned in the agreement's preamble, which lists a broader set of rights, is technically not subject to investigation. After an ECE submits its final report (a process which can take three hundred days on the outside), the council resorts to consultations. If the matter remains in dispute, then two out of three members of the council may vote to establish an arbitral panel. The arbitral panel would investigate the dispute further and, if it finds that the party violated the agreement, then the Parties would discuss an action plan to be undertaken by the Party complained against. If the action plan is not implemented or does not remedy the problem, then any Party can request that the arbitral panel be reconvened. The arbitral panel could eventually impose a "monetary enforcement assessment," and, if the fine were not paid, it could ultimately suspend NAFTA benefits in an amount no greater than that needed to collect the monetary enforcement assessment. Counting from the time a complaint is first investigated until sanctions are applied, the process can take as long as three years. Mexican Commerce Secretary Jaime Serra Puche assured members of his party that it was highly unlikely that a dispute would ever reach this stage.

Neither the threat of sanctions nor the fine are likely to be much of a deterrent to any of the governments. A fine of up to \$20 million can be levied against the offending party; no minimum has been set. The fine is to go into a fund from which the violating government may then draw and apply toward enforcement. The assumption behind this arrangement is that failure to enforce one's own laws is a problem of lack of resources, not of political will.

A final problem mentioned here has to do with the lack of political autonomy of the labor commission. The key institution is a ministerial council, made up of the three labor ministers. It is the ministerial council that calls for investigations and if conditions warrant, sets up the arbitral panels from a previously agreed-upon roster of "experts." Since initiatives for investigation of violations must either come from the ministerial council or be approved by it, the potential for government political interests and foreign diplomacy concerns to intervene, as well as the possibility of retaliation in calling for investigations, is likely to restrict serious consideration of violations by any of the parties. The remainder of the labor commission is to be made up of a trilateral International coordinating secretariat, one for labor and one for the environment, which would be set up to carry out the day-to-day work of the commission and would be overseen by the ministerial council. Each government is also responsible for setting up a national administrative office (NAO) in its respective country. Presumably, the NAO would receive complaints ("conduct preliminary reviews") on labor law matters arising in the territory of another party, consult with other NAOs, and distribute information regarding the labor commission. Details concerning the composition and activities of the NAOs are left to each government to work out.

Because the labor side accord's scope is restricted to a minimum definition of standards, it may be much more difficult for complaints regarding other labor rights to acquire legitimacy, even if they have a demonstrable effect on trade. It also appears unlikely that the scope would be expanded any time soon. During the negotiations, the United States might have been able to extract such a concession from the Mexican

government. However, after NAFTA's ratification the United States lost the key bit of leverage it had to negotiate —the fact that NAFTA had not yet been approved. While formalized free trade with Mexico may permanently raise international levels of concern over what happens within Mexican borders, it is also true that the NAFTA debate and process opened a limited window of opportunity in which to secure institutional changes that could offer greater protection to workers in all three countries. It appears that, with the final terms of the side agreements, that opportunity has now been lost. The institutional arrangements put in place by the side accords may well restrict the labor strategy of political bargaining in the transnational arena and reinforce traditional domestic strategies. Moreover, unions that try to employ transnational collective bargaining and organizing and that try to carry out solidarity around these issues are not likely to find institutional protection for such strategies at the supranational level.²⁶

Conclusion

The internationalization of domestic politics refers to the growing tendency for nongovernmental actors to engage in "international relations," acting in ways that help to shape the practices and policies of national governments. This internationalization also involves domestic interest groups and social movements forming alliances and coordinating strategies with external actors in order to better bargain with their own governments and influence change within their own countries. This confluence of external and internal pressures acting on national governments is especially important in cases of authoritarian regimes, where other, national mechanisms for pressing for reform may be limited. Examples of domestic policies and practices increasingly shaped by international nongovernmental forces can be found in the areas of human rights, environmental protection, and to a lesser extent, labor rights. Formal economic integration such as that occurring in Europe and under NAFTA also expands the opportunities for international actors to shape domestic politics. While the free trade area set out in NAFTA does not go as far as the economic union represented by the European Union, the NAFTA debate has nonetheless expanded the range of nontrade issues under discussion and heightened the Mexican government's sensitivity and responsiveness to external criticism.

The debate surrounding NAFTA has also led to an explosion of cross-border contacts, alliances, and activities among grassroots actors, representing something quite new in U.S.-Mexico relations. What might have started as a search for allies in order to defeat NAFTA, in some cases has developed into cooperation among unions operating within the same industry or sharing the same multinational employer. With the passage of NAFTA, there is an added incentive for these kinds of cooperative relations to continue. Nonetheless, with few exceptions it is not yet clear what outcomes the various activities and strategies described above will produce, nor how effective they will be. Nor is it yet clear whether the end of the NAFTA debate after the vote has closed off an important part of this transnational arena, or whether the institutions and procedures set up by the NAFTA side agreements will displace the kinds of grassroots activities that have been occurring so far. Moreover, numerous factors shape the likelihood that labor groups will pursue a transnational strategy, aside from whether or not there is a counterpart on the other side of the border. We have seen here that such factors as the nature of the industry (for example, the presence of multinationals), the size and

organizational structure of the union (for example, small vs. large; autonomy from national union leadership), and the labor organization's political role within the labor movement (and its relationship with the government) shape the likelihood that a particular union will include a transnational strategy in its repertoire. In any case, while NAFTA has greatly concerned labor, environmental, and other citizens' groups throughout North America because of the power it was seen to grant to multinational corporations, the NAFTA debate has simultaneously expanded the arena for strategic action by these groups. What use is made of this new arena is up to them.

Endnotes

1. On the history of AFL-CIO's relationship with Mexican unions, especially its treatment of independent unions, see Browne and Sims 1993.
2. In Mexico, a coalition called the Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio (Mexican Action Network on Free Trade, RMALC) was formed in 1991. Its U.S. counterparts included the Fair Trade Campaign, Citizens' Trade Watch Campaign, and the Alliance for Responsible Trade (formerly the Mobilization on Development, Trade, Labor and the Environment, MODTLE); in Canada they were the Action Canada Network and Common Frontiers.
3. Where before the focus of Mexican NGO relations had been in Europe, it has now moved to the United States and Canada (Hernandez Navarro 1993:4).
4. For a discussion of some of these cross-border efforts, see Thorup 1991; Brooks 1992; the Spring 1993 issue of Enfoque; and Browne et al. 1994.
5. In one case, a woman fired from her job at a General Electric maquila due to prior union organizing activities was brought to the United States to testify before the U.S. Senate; the United Electrical Workers, Teamsters, and Jobs with Justice were active in bringing her to the United States.
6. The Chiapas rebellion on January 1, 1994, is likely to produce further moves in the direction of political reform. The pact among political parties agreed to on January 27, 1994, is an example of the political reform ramifications of the uprising (see Eaton 1994:1 A).
7. For some examples during the Salinas administration, see La Botz 1992.
8. For a more detailed discussion of state-labor relations under the Salinas administration, see Cook forthcoming.
9. On the broader political restrictions in debating NAFTA within Mexico, see Aguilar Zinser 1993.
10. See, for example, the various positions expressed by Canadian, U.S., and Mexican labor groups during the first trilateral exchange, held in Chicago in 1991 (Trilateral Exchange 1991).
11. This essay does not consider the role of international secretariats and focuses instead on direct contacts among national labor organizations, unions, and union locals. On the problems faced by the International Metalworkers' Federation in Mexico during the 1960s and 1970s, see Middlebrook 1992:21-22.
12. A copy of the agreement is reprinted in *Latin American Labor News*, issue 5, 1992, p. 7.

13. See Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas, "Carta Internacional de Derechos Sindicales y Laborales a Incluirse en el T.L.C." July 30, 1991.

14. Here the unions have been pushing for wage "parity" by comparing the relationship between wages and cost-of-living in each country.

15. On unionization in the maquiladora sector, see Hualde 1994 (this volume).

16. The FAT has the added characteristic of being an independent organization that has NGO status. For these reasons, the FAT does not have the same kinds of political commitments to the regime that other Mexican unions do.

17. An outgrowth of these trilateral meetings was a NAFTA congress held in Mexico in 1991 at the same time as official negotiations on the agreement were taking place, sponsored by the Mexican Action Network on Free Trade, during which a "social charter" was developed (RMALC 1992).

18. Reported in SourceMex (University of New Mexico electronic mail news service), February 16, 1994.

19. For an account of this case, see La Botz 1992, and Americas Watch 1990:67-70.

20. See *La otra cara de Mexico*, no. 21, May-June 1991, pp. 4-5.

21. In a "post-NAFTA-vote" strategy session, the North American Worker to Worker Network, a coalition of local unions and labor-related NGOs, decided to support independent union organizing in Mexico through a variety of tactics, including an "Emergency Response Network" of people who will send faxes, telegrams, and take out newspaper ads in the event of illegal firings or harassment of Mexican independent labor organizers.

22. La Botz 1992; "Weekly Commentary," *ARKA Mexico Report*, August 21, 1992.

23. Reported in SourceMex (University of New Mexico electronic mail news service), February 16, 1994.

24. See *Inside U.S. Trade*, Special Report, March 5, 1993.

25. See the *North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation*, and Levinson 1993.

26. Nonetheless, it is significant that the United States NAO accepted to hear complaints filed by the United Electrical Workers and the Teamsters in 1994, even in the face of protests by U.S. business groups and Mexican government officials. In addition, a group of labor rights non-governmental organizations filed a third complaint in August 1994 against a Sony plant in Nuevo Laredo. While these hearings are not likely to lead to fines or trade sanctions, U.S. unions filing these complaints can hope that the publicity will serve to pressure U.S. companies operating in Mexico to alter their practices regarding union organizing by Mexican workers (see Myerson 1994:D1, D4; Davis 1994).

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