

Political dynamics of the Mexican Chamber of Deputies

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The assumption

Key procedures in the Lower Chamber of the Mexican Congress such as allocation of committee seats and decision-making rules have been historically shaped by informal practices and party politics. This makes legislators respond to party loyalties rather than constituencies and reinforces the power of Mexican parties across the entire system. The resulting institutional design of the Chamber is of an informal and constantly changing type, a unique case across Latin America which stems from internal and external factors.

The causes

Internal factors

- Outdated legal framework to deal with divided government and increased party competition
- Prioritization of informal agreements over formal rules
- Hierarchical decision-making by party leaders in governing bodies
- Oversized Chamber with proportional representation and direct election members

External factors

- Constitutional term limits
- Historical evolution of parties during democratization
- High party factionalism
- Electoral rules which favour the three largest parties, and which are kept that way by the latter.
- The unique democratization process of Mexico after a hegemonic party-government.

The findings

Mexican parties are extremely powerful. They extrapolate their non democratic practices to the political system, especially where institutions are weak and allow the elites to take over them, shaping them at their convenience.